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THE DESIGN AND USE

OF

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

THE TWENTY-SECOND FERNLEY LECTURE.

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BY THE

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TO

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TO WHOSE SELF-FORGETFULNESS

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PREFACE.

THE topics represented by the headings in the earlier half of the following Lecture could not be dislocated from each other without serious loss to the argument contemplated. The *end* of Scripture, if accomplished, determines the *use*. Whether the Scripture be adequate to its end or not depends on its *sufficiency*. But to be sufficient requires that it be so in its *authority* as well as in the knowledge it offers. And, at present, any discussion of these questions which entirely ignored that of *inspiration* would be an anachronism. Each question is involved in the rest. I have therefore had to choose between including them all with a much briefer treatment of each than was desirable, and dealing only with some of them, securing for those selected a more extended treatment by omitting the others. In view of the kind of service I was wishful to render, I have judged it better to take the former course.

MARSHALL RANDLES.

DIDSBURY COLLEGE, 1892.

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THE
DESIGN AND USE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCRIPTURES A DIVINE MEDIUM OF REVELATION.

First of all, we have to inquire whether the production of the Old and New Testament Scriptures was an essential part of the special process by which God made known His mind to our race; or whether, at most, the original Scriptures were only a human report of the theophanies and extraordinary communications which they recorded, and which some regard as the only supernatural revelation in any proper sense, the production of the documents being merely the work of men. In the latter view, the original Scriptures and subsequent transcriptions and translations of them were nothing more than a human record of the previous revealing events. In the other view, the original Scriptures were a continuation of the revealing process; the effect being our present Bible, which we call our revelation.

In the widest sense, revelation comprises, in addition to any supernatural communication, all the religious teaching of nature and providence, including conscience and history. Special revelation may mean those acts in which God communicated directly with men, as at Horeb and

Carmel, viewed apart from any record or report of them; or its meaning may also comprehend the written account of those acts: thus making the Scriptures the message of God for all time. This is our position.

1. *The Scriptures a Revelation.*

To those acts by which God unveiled His mind to a few ancient men some apologists would confine the term revelation, at the same time ascribing Divine inspiration to the Scriptures as the *record* of the revelation. Others, while using the term with the same limitation, assume a less plenary control of Divine agency in the production of the record.

It may be readily conceded that the original manifestations of God to men through visions and other events were the revelation in a more strict and proper sense. The distinction is clear and undeniable. But it can as little be disputed that the written accounts of those manifestations, that is, the Scriptures, are to *us*, and all post-apostolic Christians, the revelation from God; mediate, nevertheless communicatory; a reflection of the facts, yet our only means of knowing them. For us there is this written revelation, or none. Putting it aside, we retain no reliable account of the revealing facts. If our Divine revelation be not in the Scriptures, it is nowhere.

Should it be replied that Scripture is the *medium* of revelation, the same might be predicated of the preceding facts. But that is no valid objection to the revealing character of either; for the whole process of revelation, so far as we can conceive, must be by the use of means.

Immediate perception of the mind of God by man is unthinkable, and alien to the course actually taken by the Revealer. The plagues of Egypt, the voice in the bush, Isaiah's vision, were but media between the Divine and human minds; and yet we aptly call them revelations, as we may also the giving of the Scriptures.

A technical use of the words revelation and inspiration, however convenient, must not prevent our perceiving that, as matter of fact, while miraculous events revealed Divine truths to seers and apostles, the Scriptures reveal the same to us. St. Paul wrote, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received." And as his vocal or written deliverance was revelation to the Corinthians, so now his written account is revelation to us. It is "the holy *Scriptures*" that make men "wise unto salvation." God "hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son"; but where now is His utterance, except in the New Testament Scriptures? If, for example, we have any knowledge of the transfiguration, it is because we are informed by "a word of prophecy made more sure." If Christ, the Prophet typified and foretold by Moses, was to speak the words of God for all succeeding ages, to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles" and "the light of the world," His teaching must find its way to the world through the sacred documents. Christ by an act revealed to the Jews that He had power on earth to forgive sins; but that is no revelation to us except through the written account of it. When St. Paul wrote, "Behold, I show you a mystery," and proceeded to unveil the future, what he wrote was revelation to his readers. The apostles found revelation in the Old Testament Scriptures (Rom. xvi. 25, 26). So do we in both Old and New

The world is to be Christianized by receiving the gospel; but where is the gospel apart from the Scriptures? By what other means can we be "all taught of God"?

Truly, as Dr. Mackennal remarks, "in the times of Moses the law was the revelation; and the gospel was so in the apostolic period."* But the law was a written statement; and the gospel was the utterance of certain facts with their profound meaning, first in oral speech and then in writing. The gospel in the New Testament is as much a revelation as the gospel preached by the writers. Those who decline to call the Bible revelation have to learn therefrom both the end and the nature of revelation. We may say with Ewald, "The Bible is the sole invariable clear mirror of this revelation and religion"; but "only a means for what is far above it."† Virtually that makes the Bible a necessary instrument in the process of revealing to us. And, as making known the teaching of the revealing miracles, it is our only special revelation from God.

If the Scriptures were no revelation to the ancient seers, and to many who heard oral deliverances from prophets, apostles, and Christ, yet doubtless they are to us, seeing they are the only means of conveying to us the heavenly message. In that sense they are our revelation, whether so designated or not. Professor Ladd puts the case clearly: "For the Bible is not, primarily considered, a revelation or the revelation; it is rather a record of *the* revelation. It is however entitled to be called—by the same appropriate transition of terms which we use in other relations—a revelation; it has become by the very necessities of all

* *Symposium on Inspiration*, p. 75.
† *Rev. Nature and Record*, p. 465.

historic development *the* revelation to the Church and to the world of the Divine action in redemption. It becomes a revelation on account of the fact that it contains, and brings to successive generations the word of God in redemption." "The Bible, as containing the word of God, actually comprises the ultimate statement, and achieves the most important uses, of all the other media of revelation. For this reason we may even identify it, as the medium of revelation, with revelation itself: it unites all the various modes and factors of revelation in order to form one Divine word." *

2. *The Scriptures the Necessary Counterpart of the Original Facts.*

Signs are not wanting of a disposition, on the part of some apologists, to hold that Divine revelations were made by visions, dreams, voices, and kindred means to the seers and apostles, and by the personal ministry of Christ, but that the message therein contained was left to find its way to mankind at large as best it could, through merely human channels, the Scriptures serving only as ordinary history.†

* *Doc. Sacred Script.*, vol. ii., pp. 303–449. As the word "revelation" "has come to be employed technically and specifically to denote that which makes God known, we apply it exclusively to the Scriptures among literatures. In this secondary and derived sense therefore, the Scriptures are a revelation of God."—Prof. Simon, *Bible and Theocratic Literature*, p. 178.

† This seems to be the view of Dr. Alliott, *Congregational Lecture* (Psychology, Theology, Inspiration). Prof. Buhl—successor to Delitzsch—is represented as holding the same view. See the *Expository Times*, November, 1891, p. 52. The same tendency appears in an article of the American *Methodist Episcopal Review*, October, 1891. It might appear as if the writer welcomed the theory because it relieves him from the trouble of

Had it been so, the merely human book, with all its faults, must still have been our best account of the foundation facts and their import. It would have been that, or something even more untrustworthy. Then had we been poorly off indeed, and might have been tempted to listen to the impotent contention of Rome, that Protestants rely on inadequate evidence for their knowledge of Christ and the apostles.

To accept the theory under review would involve for us a serious reduction in the quality and value of the Scriptures. Our chief ground of certainty in religious truth would be swept away. We should be left to depend on a merely human collection of documents of divers origins, all its accounts being as human as Plutarch's *Lives*, without the unifying art of a common authorship. And its chances of being erroneous would be all the greater because it treated of transcendent affairs, connected with events away thousands of years in the past. In that case, the best intentions of the writers would be no security against the results of ignorance, forgetfulness, misapprehension, and misrepresentation, and that in matters where accuracy and sufficiency were essential. Then, instead of a homogeneous process of revelation, Divine in its original disclosures and in its verbal expression, we should have one Divine in its first stage, and merely human in its second; "the strength of the iron" "mixed with miry clay," "partly strong and partly broken."

defending the Bible against the attacks of the "higher criticism." Being only human, it matters not if the Bible be fictitious and self-contradictory; forgetting how far the untrustworthiness of the messenger detracts from the value of the message.

In the calling of St. Paul the two stages are distinct, and equally under Divine control. First, the miraculous manifestation to him: "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth"; and, secondly, St. Paul's testimony of these things to mankind: "For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard" (Acts xxii. 14, 15); "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth" (1 Cor. ii. 13).

The same twofold function is apparent in God's direction of Moses. First, "He made known His ways unto Moses"; but, secondly, "The Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel" (Exod. xxxiv. 27). In some cases, at least, Divine guidance attended his verbal delivery of the message: "I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Exod. iv. 12). The same complementary relation of the verbal delivery to the antecedent revelation is seen in the mission of St. John. When the risen Lord purposed that he should reveal to the Churches what was first revealed to him, it was ordered that they should receive it in writing. "Write therefore the things which thou sawest." What he should write was prescribed for him; and when written, it was what "the Spirit said unto the Churches" (Rev. i. 19; *cf.* Isa. vi. 7, Jer. i. 9).

Lacking the Divine quality, the book on which we must depend for supernatural knowledge is but a collection of miscellaneous writings, liable to all the faults and failings of merely human authors. If this be God's way of revealing Himself, how are we to escape the impression of

ineptitude? The value of Divine agency in the later stage, as in the earlier, consists in its securing fitness and adequacy for the end. But if the superhuman agency be in the earlier and not the later stage of the communication, the entire process does not inspire confidence in its complete adaptation to its end.

Moreover, on the theory I am rebutting, why are not some of the patristic writings to be included in the canon; for, though inferior to the New Testament, they contain uninspired accounts of Judaism and Christianity. Admit the theory, and the idea of a canon of sacred books vanishes, there remaining no longer the intrinsic difference between books Divine and books merely human, for all are of the latter class.

It is also noteworthy that God's method of revelation to man is in the main *historic*, the teaching being reflected to a great extent in the accounts of individuals and communities in association with direct communications from heaven; all of which together amounted to a manifestation of the mind of God. But events are not history, unless the knowledge of them be handed down in writing or other form. Oral tradition alone, after the patriarchal ages, would have been but a precarious and defective means of transmitting the knowledge; accordingly we find the history in the Scriptures. It is incredible that, without written history, a pure and trustworthy account could have been created and perpetuated. If therefore the method of revealing was to be historic, the writing, like the events it recorded, was a necessary stage in the work of revealing. That wanting, God might have spoken to Moses on the mount, and shown signs and wonders in Egypt, and His Son might

have appeared incarnate "full of grace and truth," but the revelation made thereby must have passed away like dissolving views from the vision of mankind.

Again, the portions of the Bible which are *not* history would seem to have required permanent embodiment in verbal expression, such as they have nowhere but in the Scriptures. The Ten Commandments have a history; but they are not themselves history. Their message is not in the accompanying events, but in the meaning of their words. The penning of the apostolic letters was an event; but their message from God was in what was written. It was more than history, it was direct precept, when Paul wrote, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Portions of the Bible consist of sacred songs, proverbs, parable, doctrine, prophecy, and precept, which are not all covered by the phrase, "the events and their record." How could such portions be and remain integral parts of the message from God unless reduced to and preserved in writing?

Further, minus the record, how is there any *message*? The ideas, without language or other symbol, were incommunicable to successive generations through thousands of years. Wanting either the ideas or the verbal vehicle, there is no message. Expression therefore is the necessary correlative of the facts or thoughts which God would have us know, in order to constitute a message from Him to us. And where is the expression but in the Scriptures?

But the most fatal objection to the view in question is its contrariety to the inspiration of the Scriptures. The fact of inspiration will be dealt with briefly in the sequel. It is assumed here only in order to show that it conflicts

with the theory of a merely human Bible; and that therefore, if inspiration be true, the theory must be false. If anything in the revelation be inspired, it can only be the verbal representation. It comes to the same thing whether we say the writings or the writers were inspired; for in either case the writings were produced by inspiration of God. Inspiration had to do with the embodying of the thoughts in human language. "Thus saith the Lord," "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying," "It shall come to pass, saith God," are phrases which identify the action of God with the expression of the message; and when that is done by writing, it identifies Him with the authorship of the Scripture. It is the "*Scripture*" which is "given by inspiration of God," and the "prophecy of Scripture" which men spake as they were "moved by the Holy Ghost." The force of St. Paul's citation from the law of Moses was in that what was "written" was God's saying. "Saith He it altogether for our sake? Yea, for our sake it was written" (1 Cor. ix. 9, 10). The Scriptures were no accident, but created for a Divine purpose: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4).

Hence the importance attached to the letter of Scripture, as by St. James: "To this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written" (Acts xv. 15); "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John x. 35). That Jesus was the Christ was proved from the words of Scripture. Stress was laid on "the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets" (2 Pet. iii. 2), showing that they have by inspiration and God's appointment a necessary place in the communication

of His message. An opponent may reply that he does not hold the Scriptures to be inspired. Very well; but let it be clearly understood that his view involves the denial of inspiration, and that he has to reconcile that denial with the presupposition of their own inspiration which pervades the Scriptures. On the other hand, if their theopneustic character be admitted, they are an essential part of the process by which God makes Himself known to us, and therefore they could not be lost without destroying the integrity of the Christian revelation.*

By denying to the Scriptures a necessary share in the revealing work, apologists may be relieved of the task of vindicating the superhuman origin of the documents; but so far from strengthening Christian faith, their adoption of that course would foreshadow the consequent surrender of the citadel to which they retreat. On the whole, we have good reason for putting aside as untenable the notion that the Scriptures are from first to last a merely human vehicle of revelation.

3. *The Scriptures Indispensable.*

A still more extreme position, and a logical extension of the foregoing, is taken by those who would make

* "Verbal inspiration" has become an ambiguous phrase, sometimes employed to denote the theory of mechanical dictation. Consistently with the meaning of the words, the phrase might well denote any theory according to which the function of the Spirit affected the choice of words. This might take place without mechanical dictation, and would be properly entitled to the name "verbal inspiration." It is in this sense that I employ such phrases as "verbal expression," "verbal delivery," and "verbal representation," though I mostly avoid "verbal inspiration," because it is so liable to be misunderstood.

Christianity indispensable and the Scriptures not. They profess to be without concern respecting the fate of the former, as sure to survive and flourish, though the latter were abandoned to the Gehenna of myths and legends. In some Christian quarters it has become a favourite rhetorical flourish to magnify Christ and the spirituality of His religion by disparaging the Bible as merely "a book," and that in a manner which betokens some disdain, and ignores the unique origin and character of the book: somewhat as if an English patriot should speak of Magna Charta as only "a piece of writing on parchment," or a philanthropist of the decree emancipating millions of negroes as only "a bit of writing"; but it is a misrepresentation of greater degree than these. It is a kind of spiritualistic cant, all the more unworthy when it affects superior concern for the Divine elements of religion. If the Bible be what it professes to be, produced under the supervision of the Holy Spirit, and powerfully employed by Him as the special instrument for making God known to man, to minify the idea of it to that of "a book" only —one of thousands—is to misrepresent it inexcusably.

The value of the Scripture is not *per se*, but in its being the means of representing the truth. But the value of the truth itself consists chiefly in its being the means of putting us into relation with the realities it represents, as when by it we know Jesus Christ.

The watchword of Theodore Parker's *Absolute Religion*, —"No Book, no Person, no Church,"—however irrational, is right in assuming that to lose any one of its three negations would be the loss of all; as to lose any of the three affirmations of the book, the person, the Church,

would involve the loss of all. The Bible, the Christ, and His Church stand or fall together.* The book without the Christ would be a worthless myth, and without the Church it would lack its concurrent living witness. The Christ without His Church would be a stupendous abortion, and without the book a dim personality, varying in the hazy distance, and gradually receding into deeper obscurity, or from age to age assuming new imaginary features; in either case powerless over living men, instead of exerting the force which makes Christianity the mightiest moral power in the world. The Church without the Christ was an utter impossibility. Each of the three is necessary to the other two. Christ is the only efficient Redeemer and King, who must have citizens of His kingdom. The Church is the fruit of His successful work, the abiding custodian of His word and witness of His rights, as well as the organ of His universal mission; while the written word is the expression of His will, and the charter and law of His Church.

Take away the book, and the great foundation facts of revelation are lost to view. They are now visible through the Scriptures, as the more distant stars through the telescope. Let go the book, and, for all practical purposes, the objects become non-existent. No book means no reliable vision of Christ, or of His Father and

* My own impression was like that of Dr. Salmon, who says of Dr. Dale's *The Living Christ*, "We confess to taking away the impression that, as far as the argument of this book goes, splendid as that in many respects is, the religion in question might be one of ideas rather than of historical facts, and that the *written* word need have no place, or only a subordinate place." —*Critical Review*, October, 1891. I do not suppose that Dr. Dale, who has done so much in defence and exposition of the Scriptures, would go the length of those who are referred to in the opening sentence of this section.

ours. We owe it to the book that we have still a distinct and true apprehension of Jesus Christ, and that His real character and work have not been hidden by overgrowths of extravagance and superstition.

Canon Gore writes: "It is, we may perhaps say, becoming more and more difficult to believe in the Bible without believing in the Church."* The difficulty is nearly as old as Christianity. But with equal truth we may say, it becomes more and more difficult, as the lapse of time puts us farther away from the age of Christ and the apostles, to believe in the Church without believing in the Bible. Without the Bible, the Church lacks a standard and warrant distinct from itself. The Bible is its criterion of trueness. The Church without the Bible is the ark without the testimony. The Church minus the Scriptures is minus the matter to be taught and the authority to back it. If the Church imparts the saving doctrine, it must derive it, directly or indirectly, from the Bible.

To say the book was founded on the Church is an equivocal statement. The two were in process of formation simultaneously, and were reciprocally active. The Old Testament undeniably preceded the beginnings of the Christian Church, and contributed largely to its formation. Appeals to the messianic portions were constant. During the brief space between the day of Pentecost and the production of the earliest New Testament Scriptures, the Church was taking form under the influence of the very truths which soon came to be permanently fixed in those writings. Thenceforward the complete body of Scriptures

* *Lux Mundi*, second edition, p. 338; see also Preface to tenth edition.

was the supreme authority for the principles on which the Church rested. Previously the Church government was only inchoate, and by no means uniform in all places. With the apostolic Scriptures came completeness of doctrine, discipline, and fellowship. Evidently the New Testament Scriptures were produced because they were necessary to the founding and continuance of the Church.*

A revelation in writing, as in any other form which employed human co-operation, was not likely to be free from imperfections on its human side; but the method adopted has obvious advantages. It provides a common standard for all classes of men to the end of time; it admits of easy access by the millions of ordinary men; it requires no continuation of miracles to sustain its accuracy and authority, and it presents its message in such style and compass as render it attractive and intelligible to the common people.

No authoritative Bible implies no authoritative standard of Christian doctrine or duty. For if it were not in the Bible, it would be still less in the Church and its traditions. On the assumption that the Scriptures might be dispensed with, what could hinder the Christian religion from becoming a mere matter of fashion, and so changing its distinctive character from age to age? Where would be its security against superstition, agnosticism, or paganism? What guarantee would there be against its

* Irenæus speaks of some barbarians who had "believed this faith without written testimony." But they lived near to the age when the gospel was taught orally by the apostles and others. It is not impossible for men to believe on *vivâ voce* testimony alone. But if *all* men were left to that, the possibility would probably cease from lack of competent witnesses. See Goode, *Divine Rule*, vol. iii., p. 28.

extinction, though the name might remain? The security is not in the experience of religion, for that, minus the immutable standard of doctrine, might degenerate quite as swiftly and deeply as the externals of religion. To let go our title-deeds, or to acknowledge them invalid, is not the way to retain our valuable estate.

The absurdity of thinking Christian life would remain though the Scriptures perished appears when we recollect that the revelation in the Bible is an important part of the work of redemption. The knowledge of the truth makes us free (John viii. 32). Eternal life comes by the knowledge of the true God and His Son (John xvii. 3). We are saved through belief of the truth (2 Thess. ii. 13). The mystery of salvation is revealed "by the Scriptures" "for the obedience of faith" (Rom. xvi. 25, 26). The prophetic function was as truly part of the messianic office as the priestly and the regal; and so the work of revealing, like that of atoning, was a necessary branch of the Christian scheme. The energy of the Spirit in the writers of revelation was as truly one of the fundamental facts of Christianity as was the pentecostal outpouring on the multitudes. Consequently the loss of the Scriptures would be so far the loss of the Christian religion; and what remained would be but a maimed and one-sided Christianity, falling rapidly from bad to worse.

Where had been Christianity in the past but for the Bible? Probably at best only such fragments of its basal facts would have come to our knowledge as would not have sufficed to lead us to God. Even as it was, with all the powerful restraints of the Bible on the

tendencies of a Church retrograde in doctrine, morals, and spiritual life, the people bearing the Christian name too often lapsed into impurity. How much greater had been the apostasy in the absence of Scripture light! and how wanting had been the teaching by which the depraved religion was detected and purified! The light which discovered and rebuked the evil, and showed the way back to Christ, was the teaching of holy Scripture. The Diocletian persecutors well knew the essential part played by the Scriptures in keeping the Christian cause alive, when they sought to extirpate it by destroying its sacred writings.

In respect of the truth, Protestantism having let go its Bible would be worse off than Romanism with its dogma of tradition. For that tradition is theoretically co-ordinate with the authority of Scripture, and so far as true might do a little to retard the downward tendency; whereas, on the hypothesis before us, the tendency to change, falsify, blunder, and misrepresent would operate with no counter authority to check or expose the ever-widening divergence from the truth. If sacerdotalism, despite the restraints imposed upon it by the presence and acknowledged authority of holy Scripture, has done so much to obscure and pervert original Christianity, how much worse had it been in the absence of the written word to prevent, restrain, correct, and restore!

It will not avail to contend that the abounding Christian literature now extant would suffice in the absence of the Bible to conserve and extend Christianity. That would only be saying the cause would be safe in so far as and so long as Bible teaching was reproduced in that literature;

but what would be the security for the continuance of biblical teaching when its Divine spring had been dried up? To estimate the probable result, we must suppose all the religious truth derived from the Scriptures and diffused throughout Christendom to be lost or discarded; and then how long would the religion survive? We have no reason to believe primitive Christianity without the Scriptures would have lasted till now, neither have we reason to believe it could long continue in the future under the same privation. Nor can we believe the Scriptures could have done what they have for the Christian religion in the past had they not been superhuman.

The clear conclusion is that the Scriptures are the means by which the mind of God is unveiled to us, and in that sense are our revelation, divinely given and indispensable.

CHAPTER II.

THE END OF THE REVELATION IN SCRIPTURE.

EACH book may have an end peculiar to itself, special, local, or temporary, according to its immediate occasion. Our question concerns the end of the collective body of the sacred Scriptures viewed as a communication from God to man.

That end may be gathered from the documents, and the facts they record. For both these are but parts of the same revelation, and aim at the same results. God reveals by the work of redemption, and redeems by the instrumentality of revelation. The aims of His disclosures in the miraculous events of Old and New Testament times are identical with those for which the books were written. For example, viewed as revelations from heaven, the humiliation and victory of Christ, the signs, wonders, and achievements of the apostles, the great events of the antediluvian, Mosaic, and prophetic periods were designed to unfold to our race the same truths as were to be made known by the written accounts of them. God could not purpose to teach lessons in the latter at variance with His teaching in the former. Consequently, to ascertain the end of either is to know what was common to both. The end of Christ in uttering His discourses was identical with that of the Spirit in empowering apostolic men to report them.

In some instances the unity of purpose in the writing and the things written about is obvious; *e.g.* "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."

The end is, of course, *religious*. The documents have a powerful influence on social customs and morals, on human government and civilization; but that is their reflex and secondary aim. They show a marvellous agreement with science, history, and modern Oriental discovery; but that is an incidental evidence of truthfulness, not the end for which they were written. Their proper subject is God and His relations to men; and their end is to make these known.

1. *Self-Manifestation of God.*

The supreme end of all is the glory of God. It is a mean and false view which expects the Creator to be regardless of His own honour, or to permanently subordinate it to the gratification of His creatures. To whatever extent He may veil His majesty or stoop in pity to the creature, He cannot undeify Himself or surrender His necessary perfection. Being God, He cannot divest Himself of His glory as the one source and supreme end of all things. He can no more tolerate a rival object of worship than He can worship the work of His own hands. In this matter He must be "a jealous God," if God at all. His glory will He not give to another; for then He would cease to be God.

We should never forget that, in a non-pantheistic sense,

God's works are an expression or unfolding of Himself for Himself. In them He sees Himself far more than we can see Him. Potentially the universe was in Him before it existed actually. If we may ascribe motives to Him as Creator and Lord, the primary one was a disposition to put forth His perfections in such wise as would make their results visible to Himself and to the intelligent part of the creation, and thus to glorify Himself. Unquestionably there was a supreme end in creation: "that end, beginning, mean, and end of all things, God." To have His own glory before Himself as a higher end than the blessedness of the creature was peculiarly and essentially Divine. To deny this were to say He ought not to be God. He must have more regard for the infinite than the finite, though that infinite be Himself. "For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen." "Of whom are all things, and we unto Him." *

But, happily for us, He seeks the glory of His name and the good of His creatures by the same means. Even the decalogue, which so strongly insists on the sovereign rights of God, also plainly seeks to maintain the rights and promote the interests of men. That which glorifies the Creator blesses the creature. He "will by no means clear the guilty"; and yet He is "good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works."

"Free as air Thy bounty streams
On all Thy works; Thy mercy's beams
Diffusive as Thy sun's arise."

* See Rom. xi. 36; 1 Cor. viii. 6; Col. i. 16; Ps. xxix. 2; Matt. v. 16; Isa. xliii. 7–21 and xliv. 23.

The end is the same in nature as in Scripture. If in nature He makes His glory pass before us, it is still undeniably His own, though it fill us with awe or rapture. The clearer and more direct beams which emanate through the special revelation of Scripture have the same ultimate end—the glory of God ; but in both the more immediate end is the enlightenment of men : the latter, like all lower ends, being in its turn a means to the higher end.

Whether we examine the Scriptures or the events they record, the design of God to make Himself known to men is apparent. Though in some sense He hideth Himself, and never can be fully known, the general effect of Scripture is to reveal Him ; and that is accompanied with many complaints of the slowness of men to seek this highest order of knowledge. Man was no sooner made than his Maker communed with him. And after sin had darkened his understanding, means were devised by which he might regain the forfeited knowledge.

The design of self-manifestation was plain when "God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am JEHOVAH : and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by My name Jehovah I was not known to them." "I AM THAT I AM." Doubtless "Jehovah" was intended, not merely to be a distinctive name, but also to reveal the personal nature and perfections of God, and to be further illumined by degrees through the course of following disclosures till the brightest and fullest display appeared in Him who was God "manifest in the flesh," and was "received up into glory." Why did the Lord pass before Moses and proclaim His name, but to reveal Himself? To that end He spake to Moses

"mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches," granting him to behold "the form of the Lord." The vision of Isaiah was to make known the thrice holy Lord of hosts, as His words were to make known "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy." * Many of the great deeds of the earlier dispensations aimed at making known the true God in His sole and rightful sovereignty. "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might shew in thee My power, and that My name might be published abroad in all the earth." So sang the triumphant Hebrews: "Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Nebuchadnezzar was humbled in order that he and many besides might know "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." Of idolaters God said, "I will cause them to know Mine hand and My might; and they shall know that My name is Jehovah." "That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it." "That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside Me: I am the Lord, and there is none else." These things were designed to promote the accomplishment of the time when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord"; fulfilling the prayer of the psalmist, "that men may know that Thou alone, whose name is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth." †

* Exod. vi. 2, 3, iii. 14, 15, xxxiv. 5, 6, xxxiii. 22; Isa. vi. and lvii. 15.

† Rom. ix. 17; Exod. xv. 11; Dan. iv. 25; Jer. xvi. 21; Isa. xli. 20, xlv. 6–12, xi. 9, xl., xli., xliii. 12, xliv. 8; Ps. lxxxiii. 18.

The Psalms are pervaded by the idea of a self-revealing God. "Declare His glory among the nations, His marvellous works among all the peoples." "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." "That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations." It becomes Him alone to say, "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."*

Still more clear is the purpose of self-revelation in the person and work of Christ, "the Word made flesh," "full of grace and truth," displaying "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." By direct outward vision "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Hence the Son could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"; "I have manifested Thy name": to which answer the words of St. John: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true." This revealing function is the key to many of our Lord's greatest sayings; for instance, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."†

The words of Christ qualified St. Paul the more fully to "declare" to the Athenians "the unknown God," and to the idolaters of Lystra "the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein."

* Ps. xcvi. 3, l. 2, lxvii. 2, cxlv. 11, 12, xlvi. 10; Ezek. xxxvi. 5, 6, 11, 20-23, 32, 36, 38.

† John i. 14–18, vi. 46, v. 37, xiv. 7–9, x. 38, xvii. 3–6; 1 John v. 20; Matt. xi. 27; Luke x. 22.

Notwithstanding the boldness of its speculations, "the world by wisdom knew not God"; but in Christ He "made known unto us the mystery of His will." The apostles were sent forth "to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God"; and the privilege was not for men only, but through them God designed to reveal Himself more fully to the angels. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God." Similarly His people on earth are not to display their own glory, but to "shew forth the excellencies of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light." By the gospel God hath "shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." *

2. *To reveal Salvation.*

To confine the end of revelation to the manifestation of God as little accords with the Divine character so revealed as with the contents of the revelation, in which the rescue of man is so prominent an object. The two ends are placed on the same line of the Divine purpose. For instance: "I made known unto them Thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou lovedst Me may be in them, and I in them" (John xvii. 26). The two ends are closely intervolved. God is revealed in order to our salvation; and we are saved in order to manifest the

* Acts xvii. 23, xiv. 15; 1 Cor. i. 21; Eph. i. 9, iii. 9, 10; 1 Pet. ii. 9; 2 Cor. iv. 6.

glory of God. When the apostle sets forth how the gospel succeeded in revealing God where the wisdom of this world failed to discover Him, the equivalent to knowing God is to know the way of salvation. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe": showing that to know God was virtually the same as to know the way of salvation.

It is conceivable that man might not have sinned, in which case there had been no way of salvation to reveal, though doubtless there would have been some other mode of self-manifestation. The fall being a fact, it was in harmony with all the perfections of God that He made redemption the special means of unveiling Himself to man. Mr. P. W. Grant implies the twofold end in the sub-title of his book on this subject, "The Self-revelation of Jehovah as the God of Redemption"; and more fully when he speaks of "the very highest aim of Scripture, and of all the Divine procedure which it records; namely, the revelation of Jehovah Himself in order to the salvation of the human race." *

Salvation is explicitly declared to be the object of our Lord's coming into the world, "to seek and to save that which was lost," "to guide our feet into the way of peace." The apostles testify that the Father "sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." That was the avowed object of His teaching as well as of His suffering. "These things I say, that ye may be saved." Hence He "will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." St. James takes the "word of truth" for the instrument of

* *The Great Memorial Name*, p. 10.

salvation (Jas. i. 18–21). So does St. Paul, speaking of "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Eph. i. 13). This "great salvation" was "first spoken by the Lord," and afterwards "by them that heard Him." The paramount aim of the Scriptures is to make men "wise unto salvation."

That involved the unfolding of the scheme of *redemption*, and through that the perfections of God. The Redeemer was "set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by His blood, to shew His righteousness." "For therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith." By the same scheme He sought to show His love. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." But the process of redeeming had itself to be revealed in order that "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" should "dawn upon" the lost. This was what the apostles were commissioned to do, "testifying both to small and great . . . that the Christ must suffer, and how that He first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles" (Rom. iii. 25, i. 17, v. 8; 2 Cor. iv. 4; Acts xxvi. 22).

Salvation however must not be taken to signify mere remission of sin and escape from punishment, but also renewal in righteousness, peace with God, and all the essential elements of life eternal.

In connexion with the work of redemption, it was the purpose of God to found a spiritual kingdom on earth; and revelation was intended to foretell its nature and destiny. Hence "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of" Christ was desired for believers, that

they might "know" (*inter alia*) Him as exalted "far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. i. 17–22).

The grandeur of the purpose, and its bearing on the deepest and most enduring interests of humanity, may well excite our intense concern. It deals with affairs so vast that, if the performance be equal to the design, the Bible is of more value than all other literature, and ought to command our most reverent study and earnest obedience. For then it is nothing less than the voice of God calling us away from our sin and misery into the paths of light and love and life. "The perfection of every writing consisteth in the sufficiency of it for the purpose for which it is intended."* Now all other writings, except as they imitate the Bible, either intend no such lofty end as do the Old and New Testament Scriptures, or they fail to attain it. It remains therefore for us to inquire whether the Scriptures are equal to the accomplishment of their high purpose.

* Thorndike, *Works*, vol. ii., p. 87.

CHAPTER III.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES FOR THEIR END.

HERE we are face to face with the question whether the Scriptures, as the instrument for revealing God and salvation, are adequate, in kind and degree, to that great service.

Sufficiency does not require that all parts shall be equally clear and instructive. The perfection of a building does not require that all its walls shall be of equal strength and finish, neither does the excellence of the Scriptures demand the equality of all their sections. Indeed, the historic form in which they are cast, and the relative importance of their themes, necessitate a perspective, which throws some portions into the dim background, and brings others to the front in sharp outline. Those, for example, setting forth the life of Jesus and the doctrine of the apostles are necessarily more full and explicit than some which deal less with the central personage; while the latter portions, however, are befitting and necessary for their secondary place in order to complete the revelation. Bishop Butler's remark on nature is aptly applied to Scripture by Keble, the editor of Hooker: "And things seemingly the most insignificant imaginable are perpetually observed to be necessary conditions to other things of the greatest importance: so that anything whatever may, for aught we know to the contrary, be a necessary condition of any other." *

* Hooker, *Works*, vol. i., p. 288; Butler's *Analogy*, pt. i., chap. vii.

Nay, some places may be, as yet, impenetrably obscure. The acutest exegete may be unable to extract any intelligible teaching, or the best meaning suggested may be only conjectural. It is the same in nature, where many things continue to defy the attempts of the scientist to understand them; but no scientist is he who for that reason would reject the lessons of ten thousand things as plain as they are useful. The difficulty of a text here and there is no reason for closing our eyes to the unmistakable meaning of the great bulk of the Bible.

The sceptic, in order to discredit the Bible, and the Romanist, in order to transfer the centre of confidence from it to "the Church," unite in exaggerating the difficulty of interpreting the Scriptures; but the difficulty is only with a few relatively unimportant places, and even these are continually diminishing under the operation of skilful exposition. Though some such texts should remain for ages meaningless to men, that need not deprive us of the wealth of Scripture truth already available.

As to the *minimum of Scripture knowledge* that may suffice for salvation, we are not called upon to decide. Attempts to draw the line from the opposite standpoints of Romanism and Unitarianism have not been successful. No marvel. The gospel requires that a man believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the faith of one may grasp much more of gospel truth than that of another, while both are saved. We are sometimes surprised to observe how little some believers appear to know of evangelical truth; but probably they know more than they can formulate or express, even to themselves. An unwilling auditor, with a large stock of Bible knowledge, remains unsaved, while

one eager for deliverance emerges into liberty by help of a few elementary truths about himself as a sinner and Christ as a Saviour. And if lost men may be saved by means of a few rudimentary ideas derived from Scripture, directly or indirectly, how much easier the task, all other things being equal, where the knowledge is greater and more mature! The sufficiency however is not to be measured by the amount of information men receive from the word, but by the amount it provides and offers. For aught we know to the contrary, a man may find his way to Christ by the light of the gospels and the epistles alone; therefore how abundant is the guidance of the entire Bible!

The object of saving faith cannot be reduced by a spurious catholicity or a morbid comprehensionism to a Christ robbed of His Godhead and of His mediatorial power; for then how could any sinner's trust in Him be effectual or possible? But such essential truths as the divinity and the priesthood of Christ are easily found in the gospel. As to those who distinctly perceive what the word means by faith in Christ as the Divine-human Saviour, yet will not accept Him as such, the words of an apostle are: "Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, even he that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John ii. 22, 23).

With how little knowledge can a sinner be saved? is, for practical purposes, like asking with how little food or breath he can live. As to the first question, we are obliged to answer we do not know; nor need we, since we are neither the searcher of hearts nor their judge. The only wise course is for every one to rise as far as possible

above the minimum, whatever it may be. A traveller *may* find his way on a dark night across the dangerous bog with a horn lantern, but he had far better have the daylight for his guide.*

Saving faith is voluntary. Had the revelation been so strong that any one beholding it could not disbelieve, any more than he could dissent from a mathematical demonstration, that would have been no recommendation; for it would have overridden moral freedom, and would have been a kind of evidence unsuitable to moral subjects. That it is possible for a man, by diverting his attention, by wilfully perverting his judgment, by sinister misapprehension, by disingenuous examination, by giving exclusive welcome to agreeable fallacies, or by culpable ignorance, to refuse both the salvation and the light which reveals it, and also possible, by an opposite treatment, to realize the opposite result, corresponds with the moral nature to which revelation appeals, and which makes the individual the arbiter of his own character and destiny. "There is light enough for those whose sincere wish is to see, and darkness enough to confound those of an opposite disposition." † The most central and impressive of all revelations was the word of Jesus Christ; but that was moral and resistible, for many who heard it "were offended."

* When the obscurities and deficiencies of the Bible are exaggerated in order to persuade us that the lack of instruction must be supplied by "the Church," and that from "the Church" alone can we learn the perfect canon of Scripture, the reply is easy. Perfect knowledge and certainty of the canon are not necessary to salvation; and if they were, "the Church" could not impart them. Many believe and are saved before they know anything of the canon, or very much about the teaching of Scripture.

† Pascal, quoted by H. Rogers, *Reason and Faith*, p. 16.

In like manner, resistance and disbelief of His written message is no proof of its insufficiency.

In order then to sufficiency, the revelation need not be coercive of conviction or of acceptance, or plain in every passage, or equally plain to all, or perfectly understood by any at first sight, or categorical in all its statements, or sharply defined to all in its canon, or inspired according to any particular theory of the *modus operandi*, or all familiar to a sinner before he can repent and savingly believe, or of any particular style of literature. On the other hand, it must contain enough to show men the true God and His way of salvation, and be equal to the accomplishment of its proper end. Not that it must content itself with a single presentment of each truth or duty; for, considering our dulness, forgetfulness, and negligence, to give us line upon line and precept upon precept is an excellence, as it presents the same thing in different aspects and relations.

It will now appear in what sense the Scriptures should be *perfect*; namely, not as literature, but in their fitness and adequacy for their own purpose. With regard to grammar, style, artistic order of thought, poetic flights, and other features, imperfection may be found in our best copies, not to mention interpolations and mistranslations. There may be slight inaccuracies of reference and quotation, of dates and proper names, fragmentary reports of discourses and events, quotations not intended to be literally exact, rhetorical accommodations of earlier passages by later writers, descriptions general rather than precise; but such imperfections do not interfere with the perfect fitness of the Bible for its own end, to make men wise unto salvation.

I do not concede that these alleged faults cannot be explained or shown to be consistent with the utmost historic truthfulness; and such faults as would destroy the historic truthfulness I deny. It may be that a Bible absolutely free from difficulties, which seem to test and develop in the reader a right attitude towards truth and duty, would not have answered the design of the Revealer so well as our present Bible. The very difficulties incident to the human element of the message seem to be part of that wise discipline by which our salvation is promoted.

It must not be overlooked that the perfection of the Scriptures for their proper end involves the inadmissibility of graver faults. If their history were false, their statements self-contradictory, their predictions *post factum* records, their doctrine erroneous, or their morals impure, they could not be a perfect guide to salvation. Authenticity, self-consistency, prophetic prescience, theological accuracy, and moral purity are necessary to their fitness for their end. Hence to affirm the perfection of the Scriptures for their proper end implies their perfection in such qualities as I have just named.

The perfection of the Scriptures as means to their proper end, with the qualities which that involves, is what we mean by their infallibility. In that regard they cannot err or mislead. But as there is no infallible interpreter, all who read them may err on many points. Yet they need not, and guided entirely by the Scriptures shall not, miss their way to the Redeemer. "Scripture purposing this, hath perfectly and fully done it." * Of the end Hooker says, "Although the Scripture of God be stored

* Hooker, bk. ii., chap. viii., sec. 5, vol. i., p. 334.

with infinite variety of matter in all kinds, although it abound with all sorts of laws, yet *the principal intent of Scripture is to deliver the laws of duties supernatural.*" * To the same effect says Professor G. T. Ladd: "The continuous founding and building up of the Church to the glory of God and to the saving of men is the supreme end of the Bible." † Both statements are correct, but need analytic expansion when we come to consider how far Scripture actually fulfils its promise.

If the "God-inspired" Scriptures are what St. Paul predicates of them, they are not only able to make "wise unto salvation," and "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness," but for such purpose they are *complete*; or else they could not suffice to make the "man of God" complete, "furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16). The New Testament, like the Old, was "written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4).

Are the Scriptures equal to their great task? Do they solve the paramount problems of God and salvation which have racked the minds of the greatest thinkers, and found no solution outside the Bible?

1. The chief evidence of sufficiency is, not in what the Scriptures seek to do, but in what they do. Then do they prove themselves sufficient by actually supplying the knowledge necessary to their end?

(1) Let us begin with the question of *God* Himself. Where, except in the Bible, have we a worthy or satis-

* Hooker, bk. ii., chap. viii., sec. 5, vol. i., p. 267.

† *Doc. Script.*, vol. ii., p. 546.

factory manifestation of Him? Here, as nowhere else, He appears the infinite, self-existent, eternal, almighty, omnipresent, all-wise Spirit, the only true and living God; "a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He"; "the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning"; "the fountain of life"; "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, and that will by no means clear the guilty"; "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto," and also with the contrite and humble spirit to revive it; the Creator and Ruler of the universe, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being"; the "holy, holy, holy." "God is a spirit," "God is light," "God is love," are disclosures peculiar to the Scriptures. Glimpses are afforded into the interior relations of the one Godhead sufficient to unveil the trinity of co-equal Persons. We have God invisible, yet manifest in the flesh, "one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him," energising everywhere by His Spirit.

To fallen man the most attractive attribute is His love; but in the scriptural view love is enriched by its association with other glories. The religion of the Bible is neither the "worship of power" nor, as Miss Cobbe * asserts, the "worship of love," but the worship and hearty service of the indivisible, infinite, triune, personal Being, the heavenly Father, in whom power and wisdom, righteousness and love, are essential, harmonious perfections.

The most affecting aspect is that in which eternal jus-

* *Contemporary Review*, Dec., 1890.

tice unites with compassionate love, and sovereign majesty blends with pardoning mercy, and the high and lofty One comes down to be the Friend of man, to succour the helpless, to win the wayward, to forgive the guilty, to ennoble the base, to endow men with His own image, and to give them grace and glory. The throne established in righteousness is radiant with lovingkindness. God as Father running to meet the returning prodigal, and blessing him with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, is passing wonderful. Where but in the Scriptures is it revealed that He is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works; that He is rich unto all that call upon Him, no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him?

That He condescends to dwell with us as a Father with His children may be in some degree anthropomorphic in figure, if not in fact. Nevertheless the relation is as real as it is precious. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God."

(2) As to *sin*. Do the wrongs and miseries in the world force the question upon us after all philosophy has failed to solve it? The Scriptures alone tell the story of its introduction and universal havoc. Where speculators guess that sin is the accidental effect of ignorance, or has its seat in matter, Scripture shows that it takes its rise in the free moral nature, and strikes directly and chiefly against God. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Where optimistic philosophy tells us sin is a

necessary counterpart and promotive of good, Scripture declares it wholly and essentially evil, inimical to all good, unspeakably heinous, hateful to God, stinging its victims to death. Where human opinion resolves sin into mere selfishness, Scripture makes it antagonism to God. Where maudlin sentiment would be its apologist, Scripture declares it cannot go unpunished.

(3) As to *redemption.* The fact of sin evokes the most urgent of all questions, Is there any way of deliverance from it? The question may press, because we long for a theodicy which shall "justify the ways of God to men," but more because to every man it is a matter of life or death.

The answer is at hand: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." This doctrine indeed shines through the Old Testament, and again with increased splendour in the New.

Salvation, the great boon procured by redemption, and proclaimed for all men in the Christian evangel, is the glorious theme of the New Testament, which has for its watchword, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Does sinful man require some superhuman power to attract him to the Saviour, and transform his depraved nature into the likeness of God? Here he is told of a Divine Spirit, whose energy draws men to Christ and renews them in righteousness and true holiness, enabling them to walk in the light as God is in the light, to have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth them from all sin. Man's true basis of goodness

and blessedness is shown to be effected by the new birth of the Spirit, who sheds abroad the love of God in the heart.

Thus is manifested the life of love to God and our neighbour, bearing its own witness that "we have passed from death unto life," until our love is "made perfect."

Does the sinner ask for the *conditions* of salvation? The Scriptures ring forth the answer: "Repent, and believe the gospel." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Does he crave a system of *ethics* nobler and of vastly higher motive-power than selfish utilitarianism and impracticable stoicism? The Scriptures show him the purest principles and precepts of social life, deduced from the two great commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Unlike the antinomianism which ignores practical virtue, this "love is the fulfilling of the law" towards God, and it observes towards men the golden rule of doing as it would be done by. But it is the effect of revealed "knowledge" and "truth"; for we escape the "pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and are purified by yielding to the truth: "seeing that ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

Does he desire to know how God may be approached in *worship*? He is taught that God is spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit and truth; that He will not disdain

to receive man's solemn outward homage; that if we ask in faith we shall receive; that He will regard the prayer of the destitute as well as the worship of the great assembly.

Is he anxious about a *future* state? The Scriptures alone lift the veil, that he may see how the eternal hereafter of life or ruin depends on the choice made during the present probation; and that after death will come resurrection and judgment, when God will render to every man according to "the things done in the body": "to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath. Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil. . . . But glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good." Thus life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel.

The old question which philosophy could never answer, "What is man's chief good?" the Bible clearly answers; and what is more, it shows how every man may reach it.

2. *Perspicuity.* Papal advocates have fondly magnified the obscurities of Scripture in order to fortify their contention that the Scriptures are not perspicuous enough to teach all that is necessary to salvation, and that consequently the lack must be supplied by the additional and authoritative teaching of "the Church." Whether, the Scriptures failing, the knowledge could be so supplied is another question, to be dealt with in a later section.

In the first place, this objection to the sufficiency of Scripture is virtually met by a *precise statement of the question.* It is not whether in the Scriptures there are passages

difficult, and perhaps as yet impossible to understand. On that there is here no dispute; though the objection, as often put, contains the puerile fallacy that because the way of salvation is not taught in certain places, it is taught in none. If the Scriptures were as obscure as some would make out, they could be of little use to any one.

Nor is the question whether there be impenetrable mystery underlying the clear doctrine. That is inevitable in the communication of the sublimest ideas; but the mystery does not hide or blur the parts that are clear.

Nor is it whether men may misapprehend the Scripture doctrine of salvation from want of ingenuous application or from other perversive cause.

Nor is it whether the Holy Spirit and Divine providence are necessary to help the earnest inquirer. He who inspired the writing also aids the honest reader; while with such as cherish the spirit of those who wrested the epistles of St. Paul to their own destruction probably no amount of perspicuity would produce conviction.

Nor is it whether the expositions of good men are helpful to the understanding of the word. He who gave the word instituted the living ministry for its interpretation and enforcement.

Nor is it whether a people who are denied the Bible in their mother tongue may find therein all they need: that might require a miracle.

Nor is it whether every honest reader learns all the book contains on the subject of salvation: there is always a higher point of view.

The simple question is, whether all that is necessary to salvation is presented with such fulness and clearness that

ordinary readers or hearers may easily learn therefrom the way of salvation.

In the second place, the Scriptures were regarded as plain enough by *leading Christian teachers* before the Church of Rome found it needful to seek its own aggrandisement by disparaging the Bible. "The grace of the Spirit," says St. Chrysostom, "hath so disposed and arranged them (the sacred books) that publicans, fishermen, tent-makers, pastors, and apostles, the ignorant and illiterate, may be saved by these books, lest any of the uninstructed should fly to this excuse of difficulty; that the things spoken might be easily discerned by all, that the craftsman, and the servant, and the widow, and the most unlearned of men might gain some benefit and advantage from hearing them read." *

In the next place, the matter of the objection is amply refuted by the *specimens* of Old and New Testament teaching already cited. Even the few adduced prove conclusively that, by the clear streams of light brought to a focus in the sacred book, the earnest seeker may find God and eternal life. The intelligibility of the Scriptures is all the greater from the literary form in which they are cast, being admirably adapted to interest and often to charm the ordinary reader.

3. Moreover the Scriptures do *not regard themselves as wanting in perspicuity or sufficiency.* St. Peter's allusion to some things in St. Paul's writings hard to be understood suggests the presence of many that were easy, which agrees with the fact; and in the same place it is said that the writings of St. Paul, through the wisdom given him, teach

* See this and like quotations in Dr. W. Whitaker's *Disputation on Scripture*, chap. iv., p. 395.

that "the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation." "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures," and, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," are but samples of Paul's lucidity in presenting the gospel. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, Abraham is made to say that there was enough revelation in Moses and the prophets to lead a rightly disposed man to repentance and life. How much more sufficient is the revelation with the addition of the New Testament! In the old dispensation there was enough, according to the nineteenth psalm, to convert the soul, to make wise the simple, to rejoice the heart, to enlighten the eyes, and to bring great reward. And surely the light of our Scriptures far exceeds that of the psalmist, whether written or oral! The Sadducees erred because they knew not the Scriptures. St. Luke opens his gospel by asserting his "perfect understanding of all things from the very first," and writes in order that the reader may "know the certainty of those things." St. Paul employs "great plainness of speech," and states that the veil which obscured the vision of the Jews in reading Moses is "done away in Christ." Does St. Peter refer to a flickering and inadequate light when he speaks of the "word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place"? or the Apostle Paul when he predicates such saving results of every God-inspired Scripture? Unless the sacred writers had a most overweening estimate of their work, we must believe that their writings clearly reveal Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life."

4. Further, the sufficiency of Scripture is conclusively proved by the *fact* that millions in successive ages, in many lands, and of all ranks and conditions, *have* rejoiced

in conscious salvation obtained by the light of Scripture. If all that is necessary can only be learnt from Scripture plus the teaching of the Church of Rome, how came it to pass that great numbers outside that community were saved without its help, and brought forth the fruits of holiness as plentifully as any who basked in the rays of the papal sun?

Comtism boasts of the regeneration of humanity it will work in the *future*; the religion of the Scriptures points to the nations, peoples, and numberless individuals it has actually turned "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Comtism offers no hereafter to the individual man; the Bible, besides its promise of a millennium for the race, offers him an indefeasible title to a great eternal inheritance.

If there be sympathy and fidelity in our friendship, chastity and comfort in our homes, honour and uprightness in our commerce, truth in our word, philanthropy in our hearts, stability in our social and political order; if the halo of Divine promise brightens our future beyond the grave, and that of posterity in this world, to an extent far exceeding anything experienced in non-Christian lands, and that in spite of all the forces at work for evil,—the difference is due to the uplifting influence of Christianity. But the text-book and the standard of Christianity are the Scriptures; to the instrumentality of which therefore must be ascribed the incomparable moral and spiritual advantages of Christian peoples.

When Churches had sunk into almost pagan darkness and vice, by what chief instrument was reformation effected? Not by dogmas or decrees of "the Church," but

by the Scriptures of truth. Pre-eminently so was it when the Reformers, from Wickliffe to Latimer, from Hus to Luther, from Zwingli to Calvin and Knox, turned back the tide of rank sacerdotalism. When the stagnant Churches in England were quickened by the great spiritual wave of Methodism, when a century ago an evangelical reaction rescued Scotland from its Unitarian blight, when, more recently, the rationalism of Germany was followed by the revival of Christian teaching, and whenever times of great spiritual refreshing have come upon slumbering communities in various lands, the powerful means of enlightening the intellect, rousing the conscience, and bringing dead souls to life was the gospel in the Scriptures. By the same instrument, in Australasia, Africa, the nations of the East and the West, and the islands of the sea, amongst peoples barbarous and civilized, heathenism is being superseded by Christianity, and multitudes raised from foul, idolatrous debasement to communion with the living and loving God.

A page in the history of religion, made one of the darkest by the cruel persecution of the Waldensian Churches, was rendered one of the brightest by the sturdy faith and endurance of the persecuted, for generations braving fire and sword rather than "be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ." Their steadfast devotion to their heavenly King was more than a match for ruthless, wholesale murder done under the countenance of Rome in the name of Christianity. But the mainstay of their noble fortitude was the power of the Scriptures ingrained in their daily thoughts and cherished with unconquerable tenacity.

Very unequal are the heights to which men of different powers, opportunities, and dispositions climb by the steps of Scripture. A few scale lofty summits, whence their eye sweeps over vast ranges, higher and wider than the stars, more precious than gold and pearls, gaining glimpses of the ineffable One and anticipations of the beatific vision. To them the celestial kingdom becomes intensely real. But by the same ascent feebler or less aspiring minds attain an outlook only inferior in degree, descrying relations to the Divine and the eternal which change and ennoble the significance of being. Thus, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God ordains praise, and solves for all men the problems which baffled the greatest sages.

5. Further, while the contents and the effects of the Bible are the best proof of sufficiency, it is confirmed by the fact that miraculous communications, and the recording of them in sacred Scripture, both *ceased about the same time*, namely, at the close of the apostolic age; suggesting that the message was then complete and sufficient for its purpose, and that any further deliverances professing to be from heaven were superfluous, and to be suspected of fraud or self-delusion. Even that "apostolic tradition," of which writers like Thorndike have made far too much by investing it with superhuman authority, however useful as an inferior light, is needless to complete the revelation, as the stars are to perfect the solar day. Why did the special communications stop at the death of the apostles, who were endowed with peculiar gifts for receiving them and imparting them to mankind, but because there was then enough granted, and an anathema

might be denounced on any who should alter, add, or diminish?

During the last three hundred years the progress of theological controversy has changed many things, and swept some away; but it has never shown cause for charging the Bible with excess or defect as a means to its proper end, or for our casting away its guidance in order to launch ourselves on the dead sea of unbelief, or for hoisting the flag of distress to crave the help of a co-ordinate authority in the shape of tradition or Church infallibility. In view of all that has been said, we have reason to stand firmly with the English Reformers, in holding that "holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

CHAPTER IV.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

ALL I have said will not avail to establish the perfect sufficiency of the Scriptures for their high purpose, unless they speak with an authority sufficient to bind our conscience and to support our faith. The value of their communications depends, not only on the excellence of their aim and the inherent wisdom of their subject-matter, but also on their right to command us. Failing that, their counsels are underlaid with uncertainty. If we are to use them in affairs of supreme moment as our law, without misgiving or hesitation, it is necessary that we be assured of their competency to dictate our belief and action. They must be sufficient in authority as well as in their contents. We might have been justified in taking their authority for granted; but we shall proceed to consider the uses of Scripture with more confidence and a safer cue if we first, at least, summarise the claims of Scripture to be accepted and obeyed.

That the question of authority is involved in that of sufficiency is illustrated by the caveat of a distinguished antagonist: "Out of writings thus constituted, how is it possible to make an authoritative rule of faith and practice?" *

* Martineau, *The Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 188.

The two principal warrants are the authority of truth and the authority of a Divine message.

1. *The Scriptures come to us with the Authority of Truth.*

Truth has a right to command our acceptance, provided it has the credential either of intuition or evidence. In the absence of both these supports, an idea has no warrant of authority, and I am under no intellectual or moral constraint to think it true, or submit to it. Were it not so, truth and error would have equal right to be accepted as true, for we should have no means of distinguishing.

From this law the Scriptures do not seek to be exempt. Truth is the agreement of an idea with the reality of that to which the idea relates. The question therefore is, whether the ideas put into our minds by the Scriptures correspond with reality; or, less accurately, whether the ideas in the Scriptures agree with the things they profess to represent.

The Scriptures are a witness of things said and done, natural and supernatural. The worth of their testimony is according to the degree of their credibility. The writers of the New Testament more especially come before us as eye-witnesses of what they report, or as being sufficiently near to the original witnesses to have had opportunity of knowing the truth of what they tell us. Even when they inculcate doctrine, duty, or sentiment, it is to a great extent done by statement of facts or inference therefrom. Apostolic preaching of the gospel was in great measure a declaration of facts which, from their very import, taught the great doctrines of redemption. Much of the Divine

message in the Scriptures is thus in historical form. If the Bible be historically true, its truthfulness as a whole may be admitted. Its doctrines and precepts are the interpretation of its facts. Hence to ascertain the credibility of its testimony is all-important. But to ascertain the historic truthfulness of its main statements may well satisfy us as to the rest. If the miracle of our Lord's resurrection be established, there is little need to repeat the process of proof with all the other miracles. A few test cases suffice to warrant trust in all.

In the intercourse of men with each other it is the rule to rely on testimony, and the exception to distrust it. If a traveller writes a statement of what he has seen, a scientific explorer of his discoveries, an historian of his researches; if a Burnet writes the history of his own times, or a Boswell the private life of his friend; if a witness gives evidence before a court,—the reasonable and customary course is to believe his testimony, unless there be reason for doubt or distrust, such as may exist in the incompetency, motives, or reputation of the witness, the inconsistency of his statements with each other or with known facts, the scantiness of the statements, or their want of confirmation when relating to things highly improbable on other grounds.

The last of these suppositions leads me to remark that sacred history is not necessarily invalidated because it testifies to the occurrence of supernatural events. In case of a special revelation from God on matters otherwise unknowable, such events are antecedently probable. It is impossible to conceive how the revelation could be made and accredited without miracle.

When therefore we find a history of revelations so unique and extraordinary that nothing less than the supernatural can account for them, the historian's narrative of miraculous occurrences confirms rather than discredits his testimony. Had he given us a history of such revelations without the accompaniment of miracle, that omission might have awakened reasonable doubt of the story.

It is irrelevant to reply that we and the great majority of men see no miracles. We and the majority receive no such revelations. Miracles were as much to be expected when God communicated immediately with a few men for the whole race, as they are not now to be expected when that gracious work has been long since completed.

Professor Huxley has written: "Where the miraculous is concerned, neither considerable intellectual ability, nor undoubted honesty, nor proved faithfulness as civil historians, nor profound piety, on the part of eye-witnesses and contemporaries, affords any guarantee of the objective truth of their statements, when we know that a firm belief in the miraculous was ingrained in their minds, and was the presupposition of their observations and reasonings." *

The principle here enunciated is that belief in and expectation of miracles disqualified men to bear credible testimony that they had witnessed a miracle, no matter how plainly and repeatedly they saw and affirmed the event, and no matter how fit they were in all other respects to observe and report.

To get at the pith of the argument we may ask whether the disqualification is in the witnesses or in the event—in their presupposition, that is, their expectation of the

* *Nineteenth Century*, June, 1889.

miraculous, or in the miraculousness of what is said to have taken place. It cannot be in the presupposition that the thing was possible, and more or less probable; for then that same principle would disqualify all eye-witnesses to give credible testimony about any occurrence which agreed with their presupposition: *e.g.* an earnest evolutionist could not then be trusted to report an unmistakable instance, coming under his own eye, of change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, because expectation or presupposition of evolution was ingrained in his mind. That construction is surely too absurd to have been intended by the professor. It must therefore be allowed that the expectation or presupposition did not disqualify the writers of the Bible to be credible witnesses.

Apparently the only meaning left is, that the disqualification was not the writers' previous belief in miracles, but the fact that they predicate the *miraculous* as having happened. If so, the report of a miracle would have to be disbelieved, whether the witnesses had a presupposition and expectation of it or not. For then the account would be vitiated by the miraculous nature of the alleged event, and that too on the requirement of the contrary "presupposition," that a miracle never at any time occurs.

As to the absolute impossibility of a miracle, that can only be held consistently by the atheist, the pantheist, or those who deny the existence of a personal God; and they find it a harder task to prove atheism or pantheism than we do to show that intervention in the movements of His own works is not impossible to the Creator and Upholder of all things. But agnosticism, from its essential nature, forbids its adherents to deny either the possibility or actu-

ality of such intervention. All they can say is, that they do not know.

Nor is there any force in the materialistic objection that the law of "continuity" in nature is so universal and unbroken that no room remains anywhere, or at any time, for a miracle to get in. For while the law of continuity is true enough, it is subject at every point of space and time to the almighty Lawgiver, and expresses only one of His methods of governing. It is therefore a baseless assumption to affirm that "continuity" necessarily precludes all possibility of direct interference by the Lord of nature.

It only remains to ask whether the *evidence* warrants the assertion that a miracle never happened. Now that, like denial of a God, is a negative proposition, impossible of proof; the issue therefore is narrowed to the question whether there is sufficient evidential testimony to prove that a miracle ever happened.

That question cannot be settled by the violent *petitio principii* that no amount of testimony could suffice. The question itself implies that there may be sufficient testimony. To cut the matter short by prescribing that no testimony can be strong enough is simply to beg the whole question; for whether the testimony be strong enough is precisely the point to be proved or disproved. Seeing then that all depends on the strength of the testimony, it follows that the "ability," "honesty," "faithfulness," and "piety" of "eye-witnesses and contemporaries" may do very much to entitle their story of the miraculous to be believed, their presuppositions notwithstanding. The argument of Professor Huxley is but a restatement of the oft-refuted argument of David Hume, which plays fallaciously

on the terms "experience" and "testimony." Assuming that miracles had already occurred, or were probable in the circumstances, "belief in the miraculous" was reasonable, and in no degree disentitled its subjects to testify what they knew. And if the miracles took place before their eyes, how could they as "honest" men testify as if they had not seen them?*

We claim the right to estimate the trustworthiness of Bible witnesses by the following tests:

(1) Their *moral character*. This the records present in the most favourable aspect. The apostolic writers of the New Testament devoted their lives to religion and morality, grudging no sacrifice to promulgate the gospel for the glory of God and the best interests of mankind. Among other virtues they set themselves resolutely against untruthfulness. Of all men they were the least likely to spend themselves in behalf of truth by proclaiming the greatest lies, especially when they knew it would expose them to the loss of all that men hold dear in this life, and to the judgment of God in the world to come. If they

* This defence of Bible witnesses does not bind us to accept also the stories of miracles by Apollonius the Pythagorean of Tyana in Cappadocia, and other heathens, or of the wonder-working saints of the Roman Church. These are so immeasurably surpassed by the miracles of the New Testament in object, result, character, motive, opportuneness, and evidence, that no objection to the reality of the latter can be drawn from the incredibility of the former. The one class admit of no explanation but direct interposition from God for attesting some great cause or mission, and mostly in one of the few periods when miracles specially fit in with the development of God's far-reaching designs; and they were performed by men of unexceptionable character, and reported by unexceptionable witnesses. The other class had no worthy *raison d'être*, answered no worthy end, were done in circumstances and reported by witnesses well calculated to raise doubt and suspicion, and were often closely akin to fanatical superstition or to the artifices of magic, sorcery, and legerdemain.

were not thoroughly certain of the truth of their story, they had every motive not to tell it, and yet at all costs they were constrained to declare it far and wide; a fact utterly inconsistent with dishonesty or untruthfulness.

(2) Their testimony is strengthened by their *competency* to bear witness, not merely because they had quite an average degree of ability to observe and judge,—some of them far more,—but because their opportunities were so many and so favourable. They were joint witnesses where one could correct the mistaken impressions of another. The occasions were often repeated in different places and under varied conditions, frequently in presence of many adversaries eager to catch a flaw in the conduct of Christ or His followers. Fanatical delusion in the eye-witnesses is an exploded theory. The principal events could not be the creation of their ardent desire and excited fancy, for the events they report often ran counter thereto. They were averse from the idea of the crucifixion, and more or less doubted the first tidings of the resurrection, believing because the evidence bore down all their doubts and preconceptions. That the proof was sufficient to convince Saul of Tarsus, despite his deep-rooted prejudice against Christianity, his intellectual ability to detect fraud or delusion had there been any, and his special opportunities of knowing the facts, has always been an impregnable argument against unbelief, and always will be.

(3) We are also influenced, very properly, by the *number* who first believed. The apostles and the five hundred, who believed because they saw, were speedily multiplied to thousands of men and women, who lived at a time too near the alleged events to be deceived into

acquiescence in a multitude of falsehoods at so great a cost to their interests, and who became so deeply imbued with the Christian conviction that they went forth preaching it everywhere forthwith, among Jews and Gentiles, beginning on it to rear the Church which continues to this day. To account for that marvellous work, the suggestion of scepticism, that it sprang from a few elements of truth gathered from nature, such as man's longing for God and the brotherhood of men, is absurdly inadequate. Without the supernatural facts and doctrines of the New Testament the broad foundations of the Church could not have been laid. Hence the folly of supposing these were mythical after-thoughts, crystallizing in the writings of the second century.

(4) Further, we ought not to be uninfluenced by the intrinsic *reasonableness* of the history. In its self-consistency and harmony, in the absence of the cunning which betrays the deceiver and of the art which betrays the fiction writer, in its fidelity against wrong and its helpful sympathy with right, in its frankness and directness, in its reliance for success on moral suasion, in its supreme anxiety to put all men in possession of its benefits, in its high moral tone and zeal for God and purity, it bears the marks of credible history.

(5) At many points the Bible links its story with contemporary history, and thus undesignedly evinces its correspondence with the times it treats of. Had it been fable or fiction attempting to pass for history, it would probably have avoided detailed reference to contemporary events, lest they should betray its real character; whereas, without sign of management or precaution against the sharp eyes of criticism, it refers freely to persons, places, events,

and dates, which, from other sources, we find correspond to fact.* Such writings are as unlike myths as they are unlike imposture. If the authors did not write veraciously, they laid themselves open to detection at a hundred points.

(6) Not the least important proof of authenticity is the continuous succession of historic testimony from the apostolic age to the present. The question relates chiefly to the time preceding the close of the third century, it being

* The Mosaic accounts of the creation, the fall of man, the deluge, and the dispersion are reflected in many ethnic traditions, especially those of the Chaldæans, Babylonians, and Phœnicians, also of the Parsees, American Indians, Greeks, Romans, and Polynesians; striking points of resemblance are found in traditions of nations both north and east. But in all of them there are such distortions and incongruities as suggest that the original stories, from which all the others are more or less derived, are those from which came the Mosaic accounts, whether through Chaldæan channels or not. Those of Genesis alone are free from absurdities and impossibilities. From exploration on the sites of extinct Oriental nations we learn that the Hittites and other nations spoken of in the Old Testament were real nations contemporary with the chosen people and their progenitors; that some of the kings and peoples surrounding the Israelites, with their wars and achievements, are recorded in the monuments and inscriptions now brought to light; that many geographical and personal names found in the Bible reappear in these inscriptions; that there were treasure cities in Egypt, and bricks in use, some with and others without straw. From Babylon, Nineveh, Tel-el-Maskhuta, Palestine, and Syria come unprejudiced witnesses to the historic character of the Old Testament.

Moreover the Old Testament Scriptures were to a great extent national archives and laws, and consequently the objects of familiar acquaintance and anxious care to the whole nation. They were identified with the origin and history of the Hebrews as a nation, their civil polity, the division of their land, their rights of property, and their peculiar relation to Jehovah. To substitute that history by a body of documents for the most part fictitious would surely be too hard a task to admit of success.

Moreover the solemn sacrifices, feasts, sacraments, and rites, as, for example, circumcision, the Passover, and the Sabbaths, which commemorated great events in the early history of the nation down to the end of the dispensation, would render such falsification all but impossible. We are therefore unable to get rid of the conviction that these books are historically true.

admitted that since that period the sacred books have been generally held as authentic by the Christian Church. In the third century Origen and other Christian leaders defended the authenticity of the Scriptures to the heathen, and assumed it in the Church. Moving backward to the second century, we find Tertullian, Minutius Felix, Clement of Alexandria, Theophilus of Antioch, Irenæus, Justin Martyr, and Papias doing the same.*

The historicity of the New Testament established, it becomes conclusive evidence of the authenticity of the Old. And in various ways, indeed, the New commits itself to the truthfulness of the Old. In Moses and the prophets Christ found the things concerning Himself. To Him and His apostles, as well as to the Jews of the time, the persons and events of the Old Testament were real,

* It is the less needful to multiply testimonies from the Fathers inasmuch as opposing critics have generally admitted the genuineness and authenticity of several New Testament epistles, especially Romans, first and second Corinthians, and Galatians. Many also admit Philippians, first and second Thessalonians, and Philemon; and some, the Apocalypse. But the facts in these admitted portions are substantially the same as are recognised a little later by the Fathers, and the same as are embodied in the gospels and the Acts; thus the epistles form a bridge of history by which we may pass from the witness of the Fathers to the facts of the gospels. For the epistles now assert, and again presuppose, the incarnation, teaching, miracles, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, as recorded in the gospels, and the pentecostal and other events as recorded in the Acts. This affords a strong presumption that those narrative books in which the facts are more particularly given could not be fictions of later origin. All the eight letters must have been written not later than A.D. 52 (see Prebendary Row's *Bampton Lecture*; Auberlen, *The Divine Revelation*; Beet's *Fernley Lecture*, "Credentials of the Gospel"). Some of the *present* Tübingen school are said to challenge the genuineness of the epistles which their predecessors admitted. But the grounds seem flimsy; *e.g.* according to their subjective criticism, Romans is too long and too self-contradictory in its theology to be all by Paul or any one man; and chap. viii. is but a repetition and expansion of previous parts.

from the cosmogony of Moses down to the post-exilian prophets.

The Old Testament has also its own credentials of authenticity, internal and external. An important branch of the external has received considerable accessions from recent discoveries by explorers in Palestine, Assyria, Egypt, and other lands connected with Bible history.* As to the internal, the narratives answer to the characteristics of history rather than to those of legend. For instance, those ascribed to Moses as recording the events of his time do not read like fiction, or the work of imagination based on the principle of evolution. They are, as Principal Cave says, much more like a somewhat intermittent "journal," written up as the events occurred, than fictitious compositions artistically arranged many centuries later according to a priestly ideal.† There are gaps of silence, for example, as to the doings of the Israelites during thirty-eight years in the wilderness. The laws were given at different places; and there are other features which ill accord with the supposition of an imaginative work.

2. *The Scriptures come to us with the Authority of a Divine Message.*

They come to us as a special message from God to man. A message is something spoken or written. The import of this message might at first be signified by miraculous deeds; but to all, except a few ancient men, it comes in literary form, claiming to be an expression of the mind of God.

The mere assertion of this claim however is not sufficient

* See note, p. 57, *supra.* † *The Inspiration of the Old Testament.*

warrant; for the Qu'rân, the Book of Mormon, and other writings make the same claim. To have the authority of truth it must have the evidence of truth; and similarly, to carry the authority of a special message from heaven, it must have corresponding credentials.

To a great extent the credentials of Christianity are the credentials of its sacred Scriptures, seeing it is the religion they teach. By them its foundation facts are made known to us. Indeed they are a necessary part of our Christianity as truly as are the leading events they record. And so the credentials of the Scriptures as Divine are credentials of the Christian religion. These are too familiar to need more, and too germane to our subject to admit of less, than a summary statement.

(1) That the Scriptures are a Divine message may be legitimately inferred from the two facts of their *authenticity* and their *profession* to be such a message. Being authentic, they speak truly when they claim to bring a message from God. If they were false in that, they could not be trusted in other statements. When they declare miraculous manifestations of God vouchsafed to the seers, and their own supernatural production, their truthfulness implies the veracity of those statements.

(2) The credential of *miracles* likewise rests on the authenticity. Taking the record as historically true, we find its matter was largely attested by miracle on its first delivery, as when Moses delivered messages from God to Pharaoh and the Hebrews. The teaching of Jesus and the apostles was so attested. But what was thus confirmed is the doctrine contained in the Scriptures; and so "the Lord gave testimony unto the word of His grace" (Acts xiv. 3).

(3) The credential of *prophecy* bears still more clearly on the Divine authority of the Scriptures. The miracle of prophecy was in securing an exact prediction, the very words of which should answer perfectly to the events when they took place long afterwards. In the history of ancient nations, of Christ and His kingdom, and of the Jews, more than enough of Old and New Testament prediction has been fulfilled to prove that God was in the words of the prophets. A seer beheld what was supernaturally revealed; to prophesy was not to see or think Divine thoughts, but to utter them in human language. The seeing implied the supernatural in the receptive vision; prophecy implied it in the verbal delivery—the record. This argument is unaffected by the distinction between "forth-telling" and "fore-telling." The prophets did both under Divine influence; but the latter is the kind of prophesying referred to here.

(4) The *subject-matter* on many questions so far transcends the level and reach of man's natural powers as to create a strong probability of superhuman discovery. The doctrines of the trinity, the incarnation, creation, sin, redemption, and the future state have not been clearly apprehended, and some of them not imagined, apart from the teaching contained in the Scriptures. The book is a permanent reflection of superhuman disclosures. The treatment of these subjects from the Pentateuch to the Apocalypse is a gradually brightening stream of light altogether unaccountable except as the special gift of God, first in the revealing facts, and thenceforward in the abiding record.

(5) Its claim is further supported by that marvellous *unity* of the book, of which the only satisfactory explanation

is the authoritative supervision of the Omniscient. With the widest diversity in authorship, times and places of origin, topics, style, occasions, and literary form, there is an extraordinary and admirable oneness in spirit, doctrine, aim, and tendency. One purpose gradually unfolds itself till it culminates in a complete, harmonious manifestation of what man most needs to know. Though given in divers times and manners, the parts had a mutual affinity by which, when brought together, they became a homogeneous whole. The unity is organic, doctrinal, and ethical. The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms formed a fitting combination for the preparatory dispensation. The doctrine taught in the gospels and Acts is amplified and applied in the epistles. The Old and New Testaments are mutually dependent and explanatory. The monotheism of the earlier books gradually develops in the later into the triune doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in one God. The ceremonialism of the typical system is consummated in the self-sacrifice of the Son of God. Out of the early dawn of patriarchal theophanies, and the morning of Moses and the prophets, comes the noontide manifestation of God in His Son.

If unity in nature is the goal of the scientific instinct, and the one creative mind is evinced by the all-embracing unity of the cosmos, so the marvellous oneness of the Scriptures, with all their variety, bespeaks the hand of God in their production, commending them to our confidence as His message.

(6) A message from the Holy One must itself be *morally pure*. And the Scriptures bear this test. They tell of bad men and foul deeds, but are themselves unsullied, and in

full sympathy with all that is ethically good. Their moral precepts are of the highest order, both in form and motive. Nowhere else does the duty of love to God and men find the same full expression. There is no other such armoury of weapons wherewith to resist temptation and vanquish sin; nor any equal guide to "paths of righteousness," or secret of moral transformation, enabling men to "shew forth the excellencies" of Him who is "glorious in holiness." It is not, like other systems, alloyed with corrupt or questionable moral teaching. On its pages individuals and communities stand out as lurid warnings against wrong-doing; and other examples powerfully invite to truth and goodness. But its character must be estimated, not so much by what men are represented to have been, as by what it was designed and able to make them.*

* If the objection based on the destruction of the Canaanites and other judicial acts had any force, it would be against the character of God and His people rather than the record. As to the imprecatory psalms (see Pss. v., x., xxviii., xxxv., lv., lvi., lviii., lxix., lxxi., lxxix., lxxxiii., cix., cxxxix., cxl.), I have seen no defence preferable to that which takes them to be expressive of God's purpose rather than of the writers' vindictive feeling, though they are often made more dramatic by a change to the imperative form. The imprecatory and the predictive are used interchangeably; and so too the interests of the psalmists and of the cause of God are often intermingled in the subject-matter. The enemies, in many cases at least, appear to be ideal, or of a class distinguished by its evil character, and not specific individuals. In no case is there a wish for unjust punishment, or the gratification of a cruel or revengeful spirit. If there be signs of exultation or satisfaction at the prospect, it is not in the misery of the wicked, but in the prevailing of the right and of the cause of God. This view agrees with the inspiration and high moral plane of the Psalms. To explain the imprecatory psalms as expressing the false and impure ethics of pre-Christian dispensations does not agree with the moral law of the Old Testament (*e.g.* Deut. vi. 5 and x. 12, 13; Micah vi. 8); or with the excellent moral dispositions pervading the rest of the psalms; or with the New Testament regard for some of these imprecatory psalms (*cf.* Ps. lxix.; Matt. xxiii. 38; Acts i. 20; Rom.

Sympathetic help of the poor and needy, forgiveness of injuries, words of truth, honest and benevolent deeds, chastity, honour, and philanthropy, are impressed with the seal of Heaven's approval, while voluntary sacrifice of our rights and comforts for the good of others, even enemies, is commended as God-like; and all wrong-doing is denounced. The widow's mite, the Samaritan's ministry of mercy, the discipleship of the Magdalene, the abject repentance of Israel's greatest monarch and of the dying malefactor, the prayer of a contrite publican, the seventy-fold forgiveness, the faith of a timid woman touching the hem of the Saviour's garment, the love of the Bethany family, an Ethiopian's honest search for truth, and the return of the prodigal, are transfigured by the smile of heaven.

Equally, wrong is pursued with frowns, rebukes, and penalties. Whether it screen itself under the queenly grandeur of a Jezebel, vaunt itself in the imperial court of Belshazzar, hide in the palace of king David, lurk in the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira, sneak under the phylacteries of the Pharisees, wrap itself in Gehazi's lies, or pose as accuser of an adulteress and vindicator of holy law; whether it follow Christ for the loaves and fishes, or cry with the cowardly rabble, "Not this man, but Barabbas," the bolts of truth and justice are hurled against it: nor can they miss their mark. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

The spirit and tendency are further shown by the moral *effects* of the Bible wherever it is believed and obeyed. The spiritually dead wake to newness of life; the bondslave

viii. 9, 10). It also involves such confusion of the inspired and uninspired, or such a weakening of the notion of inspiration, as virtually makes the psalms merely human.

of sin emerges into the liberty of the sons of God, "renewed in the spirit of his mind," washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. In its track slavery melts away, barbarism gives place to civilization, cruelty to brotherly kindness; manstealing, "wrecking," wars of extermination, degradation of woman, oppression, debauchery, and brutality, yield to humaneness, freedom, justice, chastity, social order and happiness, mutual helpfulness, with the glad recognition of God's fatherhood and the brotherhood of all men. The primary cause of these magnificent effects is in God; a great instrumental cause is "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." "For the word of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness; but unto us which are being saved it is the power of God." Men, it is truly said, do not find life in Christ "by means of the record apart from" the facts stated. But neither do they find it in the facts apart from the information of which the Bible is the repository. It would be absurd to think such results are effected by a book falsely professing to be from God; as if a lie could produce truth, and corruption purity. The fair conclusion is that the saving power of God is in the word, witnessing to its Divine origin.

The force of this argument is enhanced by the *wide scale* on which these effects have been realized. The conviction and conversion of Saul of Tarsus afford an unanswerable proof of the truth and divinity of the gospel. How much more the conversion of millions! Considering that in two centuries Christianity vanquished paganism in so many nations, and rendered vast multitudes instinct with spiritual life; that it has continued its conquests, and to-day dis-

plays undiminished power and aggressiveness; that it copes with mighty and manifold antagonisms, and gives promise of subduing, in order to bless, the whole world; and that its great objective instrument is the word of truth in the Scriptures,—we reasonably infer that the Scriptures are the voice of God to man.*

A kindred line of argument is that based on the *stability* and *growth* of the *Christian Church*, with its living force in the world, and its venerable institutions. That force is moral, and in great measure due to the Scriptures. Where had been the religious life and extension of the Church but for the light and guidance of the word? The Church is a standing evidence of the superhuman power of the Scriptures. It is contended that our Christian life is not dependent on the authority of the book, but the authority of the book on our Christian experience. But where had been our spiritual life but for the book? What else has kept the standard of truth and duty and gracious opportunity before the eyes of Christendom along the course of the ages? What else has recalled the Church from apostasy? By what instrument so much as "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," has the Church defended itself, and extended its conquests at home and abroad? Where do we find the Christian experience on any considerable scale without the doctrine of the book directly derived, or communicated by oral or written teaching? Let us not kick away the ladder by which we have climbed to our high advantages.

(7) The *witness of the Church*, and especially of Christian

* See *Gesta Christi*. By C. L. Brace. *The Divine Origin of Christianity*. By Dr. R. S. Storrs.

leaders in the early ages, who had excellent opportunities of ascertaining the facts, is clear and strong in support of the Divine character of the Scriptures. In the second, third, and fourth centuries teachers and people fell into many mistakes and disputes; but their testimony to the authority of the Scriptures is practically unanimous. It is assumed in their controversial, didactic, and devotional discourses. In their minds there was a clear distinction between books Divine and books merely human. They held without question the Divine authority of the apostles, and therefore the Divine authority of their writings. They often refer to the sacred books by name, and so as to give to them alone a Divine rank. They distinguish the books of the New Testament by titles and epithets which differentiate them from all merely human writings; as "the holy Scriptures," "memoirs of the apostles," "memoirs of Christ," which are called gospels, "Divine evangelists," "Scriptures of the Lord," "the evangelic and apostolic writings," "the Divine oracles," "the words of God," "oracles of the Lord." They regard them as teaching doctrine and morals with Divine authority. They place the New Testament, in point of authority, on the same level as the Old.*

(8) To many minds an easy and very convincing process

* "On the sufficiency of Scripture for the establishment of all necessary doctrine Athanasius insists repeatedly and emphatically (*C. Gent.* i., *De Incarn.* 5, *De Decr.* 32, *Vit. Ant.* 16, etc., etc.), and he follows up precept by example. 'His works are a continuous appeal to Scripture.' There is no passage in his writings which recognises tradition as *supplementing* Scripture; *i.e.* as sanctioning articles of faith not contained in Scripture."—*Athanasius.* By Principal A. Robertson. "Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers," p. lxxiv. This evidence is voluminously presented by Lardner, *Cred. Gospel Hist.*, vols. ii., iii.

is that *Christocentric* method which makes straight for the witness of Christ. He is the centre of revelation, as He is the manifestation of God. But He is also the centre of the Christian evidences. The account of Jesus Christ in the gospel being ascertained to be historically true, we have a Divine-human witness, who endorses the Divine origin and quality of the Old Testament, and pledges the gift of His Spirit for the production of the New Testament message. On this evidence it is reasonable to hold firmly to the supernatural authority of the Scriptures.

This is not the "vicious circle" of proving Christ from the New Testament and the New Testament from Christ. It is proving Christ to be real by the authentic witness of the New Testament; and then, from His words and work, proving, not the *authenticity*, but the *divinity* of the book (a third and different proposition). And while, in logical order, the first thing to ascertain is the authenticity of the New Testament, it is also true that *afterwards*, the transcendent personality of Christ, once beheld by means of the Scriptures, reacts on our minds, not to create, but to confirm our previous belief in the truth of the record. For what fictitious book could ever produce such a person? But that reaction presupposes the authenticity, though not the divinity, of the record.

In the "vicious circle," the truth of a proposition depends on the proposition which it purports to prove; and so depends on itself. In the Christocentric argument there is no such self-dependence. The truthful book gives knowledge of the Person; then the Person assures us the contents of the book are from God. That is no circle. Nor does it become one by adding that our faith in the

truthfulness of the book grows all the stronger because of the surpassing glory of the Person it discovers. A credible witness becomes more credible if what he states is found inherently probable, especially if what he states was beyond the power of any mere man to imagine.

(9) The only other evidence requiring mention is the exceedingly important one which arises from the *response* the message finds in men's minds and hearts. The message of Scripture comes with peculiar fitness and force to our moral, intellectual, and sentient nature, enlightening, searching, thrilling, subduing, as no other message does. Its light reveals a new knowledge of God and self, of condemnation and hope, of responsibility and opportunity, of duty and privilege, which compels the soul's response and emphatic *Amen.* But it does more than is meant by the oft-quoted phrase of Coleridge, the Bible "finds me"; it brings me into the state of salvation. It wakes up the soul to a sense of guilt, and shows the way of reconciliation with God in Christ. Aching under a sense of moral and spiritual hunger, the soul finds the bread of life in the word. Longing for a God who will also be a communing Father, it beholds Him through the medium of Scripture, and devoutly answers, "My Lord and my God." From mental chords hitherto dissonant it evokes the music of peace with God. Blind or dull, the mind opens to behold wondrous visions of the spiritual world, and the heart to drink in the life which alone can satisfy.

The inference is immediate and sure: the message having these results must be the word of God.* The

* "If we were to ask any of these (converted pagans or British) what it was that came home to them in the Bible, we should not find them

proof is in the consciousness of being touched and changed by a Divine power through the instrumentality of the Scriptures.

The strength of this evidence is cumulative as the responsive subject advances to higher degrees of experience. Its chief force is realized from the moment of conversion onwards. From the period of consciously passing from death unto life, with growth in grace, the renewed man more and more confidently repels the missiles of scepticism from his impregnable assurance, "whereas I was blind, now I see," and the evidence multiplies itself by the vast number of believers; for every one has his own inward proof.

It also reflects itself on the minds of all beholders, who, though many of them be unrenewed, cannot but see the beneficent influence of the word on those who accept it; and on the wide basis of induction afforded by the multi-

troubling their heads as to details of chronology or archæology, we should not find them speculating as to the exact wording of a text, or as to the process by which some of the books had assumed their present form; neither should we find them attacking the question in strictly logical order, and beginning with the inquiry what ground there was for the authority which the Bible claimed: but they would tell us that there was a great deal perhaps which they could not understand, but yet that there were sayings on every page, not few or far between, but constantly occurring, which spoke to their hearts with power."—Prof. Sanday, *Oracles of God*, p. 37.

Dr. Dale says believers who have experienced the saving power of Christ "may be uncertain about the books; they are sure about Him" (*The Living Christ*, p. 23). Yes; but could they have been so sure of Him had there been no books? The gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." But the gospel is in the Scriptures. The real power is, of course, in the person and work of our Lord; yet the word is the instrument by which it is brought home to our hearts. Some who never read a word of the Bible may yet find the Saviour from what others say of Him; but the good tidings comes from the Bible. And, as a whole, experience of salvation in these days depends, directly or indirectly, on the message.

tudes renewed after the image of God, they easily infer that the message must be Divine. "The master evidence . . . is Christ Himself speaking by His own word." *

The provision of this criterion illustrates the wisdom and goodness of God. The great majority cannot wade through Christian apologetics. Its historical and closely reasoned arguments, however necessary and beneficial even to the illiterate indirectly, must be the study of a few. But the clear, indefeasible conviction that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation is the privilege of all who believe. In respect of the more erudite evidences, the case is analogous to that of natural science, where the very few discover and demonstrate, and the many accept the results, which are confirmed in practice; but the evidence of experience is close at hand to each believer, and of easy—almost unavoidable—application.

The use made of this credential has varied much at different times. It is capable, like any other, of being pressed in such wise as would seem to imply disparagement of the rest. To-day, when historical evidence is assailed so vigorously, signs are not wanting of a tendency to rely disproportionately on the subjective, or, at any rate, to push it into greater relative prominence. Some have erred so far as to assume that their own individual subjective *dicta* were infallible, thus setting up themselves above the Scriptures. Not to speak of its arrogance, their assumption is reduced to absurdity by the fact that subjective *dicta* on

* "Christian Evidence Series," vol. i., p. 474. Dr. Martineau's attack on the historic evidence (*Seat of Authority*, etc., pp. 179, 180) can only be a difficulty to those who rely solely on the evidence of history, and not unanswerable by them. See both arguments in Dale, *The Living Christ*.

these subjects are probably not entirely alike in any two persons. The subjective test of the authority and meaning of Scripture in a hundred believers would probably give as many different results, though all the hundred might agree in some general conclusions. And who is he that can lay claim to an unerring criterion for testing holy Scripture? While maintaining the high value of this subjective support, since we would not open on Christian thought the sluices of fanatical extravagance, we must not make the believer infallible.

On the other hand, there has always been a tendency to deny or ignore this kind of evidence in those quarters where a disposition exists to concentrate all dependence for religious instruction and guidance on the teaching of the Church and ecclesiastical tradition. On this matter leading Anglicans have varied much. The allegation of Romanists, that Protestantism has no reliable criterion of holy Scripture, has been fully met by such vindicators as Dr. William Whitaker,* largely by means of the argument from experience; while others have answered by producing the voluminous evidence of history. Hooker (vol. i., p. 376) might seem to oppose the subjective credential when he says the Scriptures are the oracles of God Himself, but "this in itself we cannot say is evident. For then all men that hear it would acknowledge it in the heart as they do when they hear that 'every whole is more than part of that whole,' because this in itself is evident." But Hooker is rather arguing against the intuitive nature of the proof, and in other places recognises the experiential criterion. Rightly taken, the historical and the experiential lines of

* *Disputation on Holy Scripture.*

argument are not only compatible, but reciprocally helpful. The manifold witness of history without and the witness of consciousness within answering to each other join, and so increase their forces for the defence of the faith.

There is no reason for setting up one branch of Christian evidence against another. They are not mutually exclusive, but mutually helpful. Had we the subjective only, it would be difficult to retain some of the books in the canon, and we should be at a loss to decide between the conflicting results in different minds. Were we entirely dependent on the historical evidence, the great majority of Christians would have no criterion of their own, but would have to rely on the report of others, minus that powerful consciousness which fortifies their faith against external opposition. Leave out the moral argument, and we have but the slenderest check on immoral doctrine, and we lose the powerful recommendation of the word implied in its surpassing moral excellence. As it is, one branch of apologetics is preserved from exaggeration by another; one convinces where another makes little or no impression; one is of special use at one stage of the conflict, and another at a later stage. Where all are duly appreciated, they form an invulnerable circle of defence, within which our faith may dwell secure.

CHAPTER V.

THE INSPIRATION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

After the authenticity and Divine authority of the Scriptures, the question of their inspiration follows naturally ere we become duly equipped for turning them to their full practical use. Indeed, the doctrine of inspiration is, in some sense, a corollary of the positions we have already taken. A very summary treatment, however, is all that our space will allow.*

It is rather common to disclaim having any *theory* of inspiration; which, I presume, is but another way of saying we are ignorant of the manner in which the Inspirer acted upon the mind of the inspired. But to deal with the subject at all, we must have a *doctrine* of inspiration; and to discuss it without *defining* in what sense we employ the principal term is to promote confusion.

Now I venture to think no definition of inspiration would be suitable to the times which did not recognise, not the many mere opinions and assertions put forward in the name of modern biblical criticism, but those results for which any degree of probability can be pleaded. For example, we are bound to look at the question in relation to the

* Inspiration was expressly the subject of the Fernley Lecture for 1891. Here only such brief notice is intended as is required in setting forth the design and use of Scripture.

hypotheses that the authorship of some parts of the Bible passing under a single name may have been composite; that earlier traditions, oral or written, and official documents may have been more or less appropriated; that some of the books may not have been written just at the time or by the persons traditionally supposed. To hold either the negative or affirmative on these questions is no proof of ignorance or inferiority in biblical criticism. It must also be borne in mind that during the fifteen centuries through which the writing extended there were many changes, not only of religious and national life, but of language and dialect, among the people more immediately interested in the writings given "by divers portions and in divers manners"; and consequently that the Scriptures, more particularly of the Old Testament, must have undergone much transcription, revision, and editorial manipulation before they attained their final form. No wonder therefore if, in spite of jealous care on the part of Jews and Christians (though the Jews were not always equally careful), some interpolations, often as manifest as they are unimportant, some obscurities, and some seeming discrepancies have crept into the documents.

Such inspiration as was claimed by Muhammad for his Qu'rân, all received in writing direct from heaven, and delivered by himself to the world with no better credentials than his own *ipse dixit*, is essentially different from any inspiration possible to our collection of sacred writings, which in their origin were as truly human as they were Divine, and in their perpetuation were exposed to many of the same dangers as other ancient writings.

On the other hand, no inspiration would be worth contending for which amounted to nothing beyond what belongs, more or less, to the experience of God's people in general, or which reduced the sacred Scriptures to the level of other literature, or ignored the special energy of the Holy Spirit in their production, or left them a fallible and unreliable guide to salvation, or deprived them of supremacy in matters of faith and morals, or surrendered their strict truthfulness or moral integrity.

All these conditions, I submit, are complied with if we say that by inspiration we mean *that extraordinary control of the Holy Spirit over the production of the Old and New Testament Scriptures which was a chief cause of their being, for man, an unerring guide to salvation.*

I say "control," without attempting to include a theory of the *modus operandi* or secret mode of the Spirit's energy in the mind of an inspired man; though it would appear the Spirit made him His active rather than His passive organ, not suspending his natural faculties or overriding his personality, but energising upon and through them in some way as inscrutable to us as His agency in regenerating a depraved heart. Whether it took the form of suggestion, illumination, elevation, invigoration, impulsion, constraint, restraint, or superintendence, either separately or together, it is not necessary for us to know in order to believe in its reality. There is the best reason for thinking it was "in divers manners." Enough that the Spirit overruled the process so as to insure the right result.

I say "extraordinary" control, to distinguish it from the ordinary work of the same Spirit, which has widely different ends from that of conveying a message from God to

the human race; namely, to bring men to repentance and to sanctify their sinful souls.

I say "an unerring guide," not to science, art, history, or knowledge of earthly affairs, but to the one, specific, paramount end of the Christian religion, "salvation"—so unerring that, if a man follow its guidance fully, he cannot fail to reach that end. And yet, as it does not make him infallible, he may err in judgment, or fail through subtle, insidious faults of moral principle.

It was not the only, but "a chief cause"; for supernatural supply of subject-matter was also a chief cause. Our definition also leaves room for the Spirit's action, not only in original composition such as might be penned by David and St. Paul, and in the selection and orderly incorporation of older materials such as might be made by Moses, St. Luke, and other historians, but also in His supervision of the discriminative selection and editorial revision and redaction of Old Testament books by such servants of God as Ezra, and of the New Testament by early Christians, possibly gifted for the purpose with the "discernings of spirits."

We also avoid any difficulty which might arise from admitting composite authorship. Solomon, Agur, and Lemuel might all write by inspiration; and one of them, or some fourth person, might be inspired to select their inspired writings and unite them in the book of Proverbs. Our concern is to know if the book, whoever might be the contributors, belongs to the inspired class.*

* It might even be maintained that our definition is not inconsistent with the theory which supposes the control to be only *virtual* or *indirect*; that is to say, the vision or other form of manifestation made so distinct an impression on the seer's mind that he needed no further superhuman influence to enable him to reproduce it in writing. This, with the addition of previous

For the faith of most Christians in the inspiration of the Scriptures as a whole it is not necessary for them to worm their way through all the intricate windings of the "higher criticism." Having reason to believe in the proper deity of Jesus Christ, they are content to be assured of the Old Testament, designated the *Law*, the *Prophets*, and the *Hagiographa*, as Divine, by the plain endorsement of Himself and His apostles; and to be assured of the New by His promise of the Spirit to enable the apostles to deliver the revelation of the new dispensation, and by the fulfilment after the day of Pentecost.

Others would rely on the subjective test of personal experience. The response which Scripture makes to their deepest spiritual needs, and the blessed effects it produces in their spiritual state are to them proof sufficient of its having come from God, not only with regard to its ideas, but also to its verbal embodiment. For the latter has much to do with the happy result, and cannot be left out of reckoning in accounting for the benefit. Others would rely chiefly on the historic witness of the Christian Church, handed down through the ages.*

Again, the marvellous *unity* of doctrine, spirit, and

preparation of the seer's mind for receiving the impression, seems to be the theory of Atwell (*Pauline Theory of Inspiration*). Against the theory itself, it may be observed: (1) That it does not account for such of the Scriptures as were written by men who were not seers, as the Acts, much of the gospels, and much of the Old Testament; (2) it is at variance with the directness of the Spirit's control assumed and asserted in some of the writings; (3) it involves so much of miracle in impressing the seer's mind and its previous preparation that, in all reason, it might as well be allowed that the immediate superhuman control extended to the writing.

* *E.g.* the manifesto on the "Bible and Modern Criticism" signed by thirty-eight clergymen, including the deans of Canterbury and St. Paul's, and other dignitaries. See the *Times* newspaper, Dec. 18, 1891.

tendency which bespeaks the one Divine master-mind as the source of the subject-matter bespeaks also Divine control as necessary to account for the literary contents and make-up of the message. The homogeneity of the Scriptures as such requires inspiration to explain how it could arise. This unity is all the more wonderful in view of the "sundry times and divers manners" in which the book was produced. Consisting of so many different portions, written at so many different periods, in so many styles, on such diverse occasions, in different languages, and requiring to be discriminated from all other literature and joined together in a single volume, what but inspiration could prepare the parts and unite them in one self-consistent, harmonious whole?

Those who desire further evidence have not far to seek for it.

1. *Presumptive.*—(1) Although inspiration is an exceptional intervention of God, it corresponds to the exceptional nature of the case. A special message coming from God to us in the form of literature recommends itself the more effectually to our acceptance if it profess to be inspired, than if it offer itself as altogether dependent on fallible men for its expression. Offering itself as produced under the control of the Holy Spirit, it claims to have a quality which any such communication might have been expected to possess, and would be all the better for possessing. To come without it would seem less in harmony with Divine wisdom than to come with it, considering the importance of its design and the liability of man to err. To carry with it that explanation of its origin is a reason for our believing it, and thus inspiration is a credential of the revelation.

(2) Inspiration is *of a piece with the rest of the plan* of revelation. Supernaturalness belonged to the previous facts of revelation, as at Sinai, and to the accrediting miracles and prophecy. Inspiration was but the same attribute extended to the later and completing stage of the revelation. The message being for the human race, it were strange if, at the previous stage, God specially intervened to convey it to a few of the ancients, and not afterwards to secure its safe and accurate delivery to ordinary members of the human family in general. There was an antecedent probability that He would act immediately in the later stage as in the earlier, especially seeing how much the success of the whole depended on a true and full representation in human language.

If it was not beneath Him to prescribe in detail the cultus and laws of the Israelites, and to give minute directions to individual patriarchs and apostles, neither would it be derogatory for Him to safeguard the delivery of the most important of all His communications to men. Surely the stream of celestial knowledge is all the more pure because God took special means by inspiration to preserve it from intermixture of error when first it flowed forth in human speech.

The case is by no means the same with translations and transcriptions as with the original record. The great thing was to get the message first born into human language,—God's thoughts into man's symbols; the more so as the seers were not always the writers of what they saw. Having once entered into the language of men, and been cast in the mould of Scripture, what remained to render the message permanent and universal was only

its reproduction in the same or other words as the customary language of its possessors changed, or need arose to pass it on to peoples of other tongues. The first thing accomplished, subsequent reproductions might well be left to ordinary safeguards, such as the comparison of many copies with each other, the keen eye of critical scholarship, and that providential oversight to which all events are subject. Such a course provides us with adequate facilities for ascertaining the will of God, and yet leaves room for the play of our moral freedom in accepting or refusing the message as Divine.

(3) It is conceivable that the Bible, though uninspired and of merely human origin, might be taken to be a message from God, because it represented the supernatural events by which He originally revealed Himself, and which were duly accredited by their own evidence; that is, a merely human record of Divine revelations is supposed to be the providential means of making them known to us, because it happens to coincide with them. But how could we be certain of the coincidence? That such a collection of documents as we have in the Bible should be produced without the control of the Spirit, and yet should happen to be a full and accurate representation of His mind concerning man, is a supposition against which the chances are innumerable. The hypothesis implies a fortuitous combination so improbable, that nothing less than a miracle could account for it. It is surely more reasonable to believe that God controlled the creation of the Scriptures in such wise and to such extent as fitted them to be a message from Him to mankind. Credentials *prove* them adequate; inspiration *made* them so.

Nevertheless, while it is a great advantage to be able to trace the wisdom of any particular method, it is much more important to know what method the wisdom of God has actually adopted. The fact that He inspired and ordained the Scriptures to be the means of communication is far more conclusive than our reasonings on the fitness of that course.

2. Inspiration of the writing differs only in outward mechanical form from *inspired oral speech*, which certainly existed in the times and circumstances in which the Scriptures took their rise. "When they deliver you up," said Jesus, "be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (Matt. x. 19, 20; Mark xiii. 11; Luke xii. 11, 12). In the fourth chapter of Acts and other places we have the fulfilment of His promise. In like manner Agabus prophesied, "Thus saith the Holy Ghost" (Acts xxi. 11). The same inspiration is apparent in the Old Testament. David, "the sweet psalmist of Israel," said, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was upon my tongue" (2 Sam. xxiii. 1, 2). God said to Moses, "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt speak" (Exod. iv. 10–16; see Micah iii. 8, Jer. i. 7–9). The inspiration of Scripture was essentially the same as this; in the one case the discourse being by means of the voice, in the other by writing.

In the second chapter of Acts we see how our Lord's promise of the Spirit was fulfilled (Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. 4, 5). The disciples "began to *speak* with other tongues,

as the Spirit gave them *utterance*." So far as their speech was in languages they had not known before, nothing but a miracle could make it intelligible to the foreign visitors to whom the languages belonged. One result of the Spirit's influence was that disciples *prophesied*, which was done in speech (Acts ii. 18). St. Peter's chief address seems to have been in his own dialect, and others in foreign tongues. But in every case the control of the Spirit extended, not only to the conception of ideas, but also to their verbal expression.

The identity of inspiration in the two modes of utterance appears in the fact that the inspired person sometimes wrote with his own hand, and at other times dictated to an amanuensis, as St. Paul did to Tychicus, and Jeremiah to Baruch (Jer. xxxvi. 4). In such case the inspiration of the speaking apostle or prophet would be just the same as if he did the mechanical writing himself.

Consequently, when the great message had to be written, it was no unfamiliar thing that God did sometimes immediately influence men's verbal expression of ideas. Can we suppose that He would control Moses, David, and the apostles when they spoke for God with the voice, and not when they did it in writing? At any rate, it is evident there did actually exist just that kind of inspiration in oral speech which we claim for the writing of the Scriptures. That chosen men should *write* under that influence is the more probable because undeniably they often spoke under it *vivâ voce*.

3. Inspiration was adapted to the various *kinds of literature* of which the Bible consists, and to some of them was essential. Much of it is history, on the truthfulness of which depends the value of what it teaches. Hence the

advantage of the Spirit's supervision. Many places consist of *hagiographa*, or devotional and preceptive writing, uttering principles and sentiments which, if unsound, must tend to mislead. Other places declare doctrines concerning God and the spiritual world of the utmost consequence, which needed such guarantee as inspiration would afford. In the formal delivery of God's law, according to which He will judge us, exactness in the terms is a necessity. But of such accuracy what but inspiration can assure us?

In the writing of *predictive* Scripture, inspiration seems to be still more necessary. The seer (*ghōh-zeh'* or *rōh-eh'*) received Divine communications; the prophet (*nāh-vee'*) had to express them in such terms as would agree with the facts of fulfilment, which might be centuries or millenniums afterwards. But how could the prophet do it without inspiration? An impressive vision alone would not suffice for his reproduction of it in words, even where he was both seer and prophet. Still greater would be his difficulty where he had himself experienced no vision of it; and yet even greater where the writer did not clearly understand his own prediction (1 Pet. i. 11; Dan. xii. 8). Cases like that of Saul and his companions (1 Sam. xix. 23) show that to prophesy was to speak or utter under some superhuman power. The fulfilment of prediction proves the correctness of its very words, written without the possibility of knowing the events by natural means. What but inspiration caused the words of the prophets, often committing them to many particulars, to be an accurate description of those events? Now considering how much of the Bible consists of prediction, which history has already verified, for example,

concerning the nations of Palestine, Babylon, Nineveh, Assyria, and other lands, concerning the Messiah and His kingdom, and concerning the Jewish race; and considering that no one of its predictions has ever been falsified,—we are bound to believe that the predictive parts of Scripture require inspiration to account for their original production.

4. The Scriptures bear *witness to their own* inspiration. Let it not be imagined they are disqualified to do this by the fact that their own genesis is the question. Their ascertained authenticity, and the superior knowledge of their writers on the subject, render the Scriptures the best witness available. If their statements are veracious, they are so on the question of their own inspiration, as on any other. If they are not strictly true on that subject, they are untrustworthy on others, and of little or no value. Being a true and competent witness, their evidence is decisive. Not that we expect to find their testimony in the shape of categorical propositions ready made to fit into our creed. We have to gather their teaching by fair interpretation, and often from places not expressly treating of the question. But it is not for that reason the less convincing.

(1) *Affirmed.* What could be plainer than St. Paul's declaration, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God"; or, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable," etc. (2 Tim. iii. 16)? The "Revised" rendering brings out more clearly the idea that the inspiration causes the tendency of Scripture to spiritual profit and salvation. It will hardly be denied that "every scripture" includes the Old Testament; and there are some

grounds for thinking it includes the New. The phrase is general enough to comprehend any such Scripture as might be afterwards written. There is no definite article to "Scripture." If St. Paul wrote this epistle about A.D. 66, he must have known that much of the New Testament was then in being, and largely written by himself. And St. Peter alludes to St. Paul's epistles as if they were inspired, and of equal rank with "the other Scriptures." Our question, however, is not the canon, but the inspiration of Scripture, which the Apostle Paul distinctly teaches.

St. Peter is equally explicit when he accounts for holy Scripture as from God. "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21). The writers *as such* were moved by the Holy Ghost; and the Spirit's share in producing the Scripture is the reason why we ought to "take heed" unto its guidance. Be the canon more or less, the language of the apostle leaves nothing to be desired in the way of asserting that the Scripture was Divine as well as human in its authorship.

Bearing in mind St. Peter's views of inspiration as here taught, we may well take him to claim the gift for himself when he writes, "This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance; that ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles" (2 Pet. iii. 1, 2). Does he not here imply that his two epistles are authoritative, being written under that superhuman influence to which he refers in the first chapter? This view is confirmed by the pre-

dictive passages which follow, depicting the future of the globe and its inhabitants (vers. 10–13).

Similarly St. Paul's view of inspiration given to Timothy sheds light on his words to the Thessalonians, as claiming that he wrote under the same influence. "When ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thess. ii. 13). And so again to the Corinthians: "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (1 Cor. xiv. 37). And yet more expressly he attributes his own representation of Divine things to the Spirit: "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth" (1 Cor. ii. 13). He also writes: "The Spirit saith expressly" (ῥητῶς = in so many words), "that in later times some shall fall away from the faith" (1 Tim. iv. 1). Where is this more distinctly set forth than in St. Paul's own writing? By this sentence the apostle would appear to trace to the agency of the Spirit the predictions of the apostasy in both Old and New Testament books, including his own (*cf.* 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2 Thess. ii. 3, Matt. xxiv. 11–24, Dan. vii. 25, viii. 23, and xi. 30, in the light of John xvi. 13).*

* There is no real difficulty in explaining 1 Cor. vii. in agreement with St. Paul's distinct claim to inspiration. The idea of his apostolic authority runs through the chapter, and in ver. 17 becomes accentuated: "And so ordain I in all the Churches."

Ver. 6, "But this I say by way of permission, not of commandment," is plainly a permission given by St. Paul to those of his readers whom it concerned to take a certain course to which they were not bound by duty. But

(2) *The inspiration of one part is recognised in another.* St. Peter ranks St. Paul's epistles with the prophets. "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unsteadfast

the fact of his having power to give permission, with the implied power to transmit binding commandments, shows his authority to speak as from God.

Ver. 10, "But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord," is no renunciation of his inspiration, but a backing up of his words by those of the Lord Jesus, who had legislated on the question (Matt. v. 31, 32, xix. 3–9; Mark x. 2–12; Luke xvi. 18).

Ver. 12, "But to the rest say I, not the Lord," is on a question about which Christ had not spoken, relating to an unbelieving wife or husband. The apostle speaks instead of Christ.

Ver. 25, "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: but I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." Some take this to imply that he had nothing to deliver on this point but the opinion or recommendation of a Christian man; on which view it would, however, suggest that other things in the chapter were of Divine authority. It seems more in harmony with the foregoing passages to understand that if it was but a recommendation, it was nevertheless conceived and delivered under the control of the inspiring Spirit. Otherwise, how can we know when an apostle is writing by inspiration and when not, except in the very few cases where he informs us? To take the "mercy" obtained and the faithfulness in connexion with his apostolic teaching seems more relevant to his aim than to take them simply in connexion with his Christian experience.

Ver. 40, "But she is happier if she abide as she is, after my judgment: and I think that I also have the Spirit of God." To "think" here means, as Dean Stanley puts it, to "trust." It may mean, as many say, "I trust I have the same Spirit of God as other Christians to whom the Corinthians listen"; in which case there is no doubt or disavowal of inspiration, and even then the apostle might write this very text under the Spirit's control. But something could be said in favour of taking it to be an assertion by St. Paul of his having the Spirit as inspirer. The latter view makes the text an additional proof of St. Paul's inspiration; the former is perfectly consistent with his having that gift. This chapter, which to a superficial observation might seem adverse to the doctrine of inspiration, on closer scrutiny must be ranked among its supports.

wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. iii. 15, 16). St. Peter must have held St. Paul's epistles to be the effect of that inspiration which originated all "prophecy of Scripture."

Very numerous are the instances in which Christ and His apostles refer to the Scriptures of the Old Testament as God-breathed. "How then doth David in the Spirit call Him Lord?" (Matt. xxii. 42–45) is a case of appeal to the letter of the Old Testament as given under the influence of the Spirit. The predictions of the Psalms concerning Judas are distinctly ascribed by St. Peter to the Spirit. "Brethren, it was needful that the Scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spake before by the mouth of David" (Acts i. 16). Quoting from Psalm xcv., the Hebrew epistle fathers the writing on the Spirit, "as the Holy Ghost saith" (Heb. iii. 7). Indeed, the human writer and the Spirit were so closely identified in the authorship, that now the one and then the other is spoken of as the author. A certain passage in the sixth chapter of Isaiah is referred to in Mark, Luke, and Romans without the name of the prophet; in Matthew and John as Isaiah's; but in Acts, St. Paul attributes it to both the prophet and the Spirit. "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet" (Acts xxviii. 25). No doubt of the Spirit's essential share in producing the Scriptures seems to have entered the minds of Christ and His miraculously gifted apostles.

5. On the eve of our Lord's departure, He *promised* His apostles *the keys* of Christian doctrine and authority (Matt. xvi. 19, xviii. 18; John xx. 22, 23); and the *special enduement of the Spirit* to qualify them to complete the

message from heaven, "even the Spirit of truth" to "teach them all things, and to bring all things to their remembrance" (John xiv. 17–26, xv. 26, 27, and xvi. 7–14). In the Acts and epistles we find how the promise was fulfilled in the prophetic teaching of apostles and apostolic men, under the inspiration of the Spirit (*e.g.* Acts ii. 4; 1 Cor. xii.; Eph. iv.).

6. *Titles.* If the Scripture was not inspired, the extraordinary honour in which it was held by Christ and the apostles was unaccountably excessive. It is called *par excellence* "the Scriptures," "the Scriptures of the prophets, "the prophetic Scripture," "prophecy of Scripture," "the holy Scriptures," "the law and the prophets," "Moses and the prophets," "the law, the prophets, and the holy writings." To no literature outside of itself does the Bible ever apply these epithets and titles. They are evidently reserved for literature made Divine by inspiration.

Without any approach to bibliolatry, which is far from being the danger of these times, we have abundant reason to join the faithful of the past in thankful appreciation of the Scriptures as a great gift of God, fitted by their Divine origin and their contents to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Christ.*

* See Appendix I.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HIGHER CRITICISM.

THE kind of criticism which in the first half of the century failed to disprove the authenticity of the New Testament is at present directed in full force against that of the Old Testament. It is called "higher" and "historical," because it professes to pass beyond questions of the text and exegesis to the anterior questions of genuineness and authenticity.

Our estimate of this criticism ought not to be either indiscriminate praise or blame. It becomes us to maintain an attitude of readiness to welcome, with all its just consequences, whatever is fairly and clearly proved to be true; and at the same time to reject conclusions which are contrary to accepted beliefs until they are established by sufficient evidence. To blame any one for doing the latter is as unfair and irrational as to blame him for doing the former. The true mean is probably that which agrees neither with those who have nothing but laudation for the criticism as a great and unmixed blessing, nor with those who, at the other extreme, see in it no element of truth or benefit. It calls itself a science, and it must be admitted that much of its toil is in scientific form; but if internal conflict of teaching on leading questions, fallacious reasoning, and unwarrantable assertion are unscientific,

there is still much that seeks to pass for "higher criticism" which is not science. To say the least, the criticism has earned no right of reason to have its more advanced conclusions placed on the level of ascertained truth. For example, the post-exilian origin of so many Levitical laws cannot be science in the same sense as the revolutions of the earth. But this need not prevent our acknowledging that the criticism has compelled a closer study of the Old Testament by all who care to follow the controversy. It has also led to new interpretations of particular passages. It has rendered good service by leading us to some advantageous readjustments of the historic perspective of Scripture. Not that we have found reason to accept the order and dates assigned to the several books by the more extreme critics; but their agitation of the question, with other causes, called imperatively for re-examination, with the result that on some points our views have been modified, and the relative distances of the origins of the books, if not much changed, are more clearly discerned, which is a great advantage in our study and use of Holy Writ. And even greater benefits may yet be reaped as the advanced wing of the criticism abates its pretensions and recedes to safer ground—so justifying its claim to the august name of science. Our present concern is, not to recount the services rendered by the criticism, but rather to suggest some points where its contentions may be withstood, or proof awaited without fear or danger.

Higher critics are of different schools and many varieties, with opinions shading off into utter rationalism in one direction, and evangelical doctrine in the other. There are critics and critics; for example, those who hold

firmly to the veracity and supernaturalness of the Scriptures, and those who hold to neither. The schools of Dillmann and Graf, while agreed on some important points, differ as to the temporal order and dates of the earlier portions of the Old Testament. Hence the analysis of pentateuchal authorship, according to Dillmann, differs widely from that of Wellhausen, who follows on the lines of Graf.* Dr. A. Kuenen, of Leyden (recently deceased), and Dr. Julius Wellhausen, of Marburg, may be taken to represent the advanced Grafians, with whose views we are at present more particularly concerned, as they stand opposed to the historic and Divine character which has generally been claimed for the Old Testament. At the opposite pole are such able critics as Keil, Riehm, Professors Green and Bissell, Principal Cave, Canon Girdlestone, and Bishop Ellicott; while between, at various distances, are such as Delitzsch, Kittel, Dr. W. R. Smith, Professors Cheyne, Driver, and Kirkpatrick. Others again, like Canon Gore, accepting some of the more daring conclusions of the critics, seek to harmonize them with retention of New Testament faith.

According to Kuenen and Wellhausen, the first six books (Hexateuch) are a conglomerate mass, made up largely of ancient traditions, oral or written, combined, written over, interpolated, transposed, and from time to time augmented. The cosmogony is a myth. The greater part of the "priestly code," that is, the detailed prescriptions of sacerdotal laws, often called the Levitical, and

* See analysis presented by the Rev. B. W. Bacon, *Hebraica*, 1889–1890. Bishop Ellicott has happily called the two opposite positions the "analytical" and the "rectified traditional" theories (*Christus Comprobator*).

constituting a large proportion of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, and some fragments elsewhere, were of post-Mosaic origin, and the growth of many centuries. This code was matured after the exile in the interests of the priestly party against the prophetic, and foisted on the Jewish people as if it were an ancient system given to their fathers through the ministry of Moses, the whole being really redacted and finished in the fifth century B.C.*

The critics profess to have discovered from the Bible itself that the lives of the patriarchs are legendary, as are also the miracles of the exodus and of the times of the prophets. The worship of the Israelites, they say, was at first rudimentary, domestic, without the central altar and worship of later times, and without the national priesthood. And some go so far as to contend that certain idolatrous customs were not forbidden. The tabernacle, they tell us, never really existed; it was only the ideal shadow of the temple thrown back into the past, to give the appearance of truth and reality to the post-exilic invention which pretended to be the work of Moses. In this estimate the case would appear to be unlike the romance which expects to be taken for a work of imagination: it is more like the "Forged Decretals," seeking to get falsehoods accepted for facts. Chronicles, Nehemiah, and Ezra

* Canon Driver says the Priests' Code is "based upon pre-existing temple usage." "Institutions or usages, such as the distinction of clean and unclean, the prohibition to eat with the blood, sacrifices to be without blemish, regulations determining the treatment of leprosy, vows, the avenger of blood, etc., were ancient in Israel" (*Introduction*, p. 138). This however is little compared with the proportion dated centuries later, at all events by some of the critics.

are taken to be but part and parcel of the scheme for securing the success of the new cultus. Some of the critics are frank enough to call the whole movement a fraud; while others gloss it over as a kind of unconscious or innocent deception.

Diverse are the ways in which Christian believers treat this latest form of attack. Some may content themselves with ignoring or denouncing it; but if all did that, judgment would go against them by default: others surrender at discretion, and swell the cry that all is lost: others, again, propose compromises, it may be to give up the Mosaic history and retain the rest, overlooking that the principles on which they yield any essential part will eventually compel them to yield all; or again, the proposal may be to surrender the historic truth of the Old Testament, and endeavour to reconcile that course with retention of evangelical doctrine, content to accept ancient myths and legends as the word of the Lord; or yet again, to throw over the Old Testament and retain the New, as if half the telescope were better than the whole.

I, for one, am not prepared to accept any of these proposals, but prefer to side with those who, believing that the main contentions of the extreme critics are an assault on essential truth, seek to meet it by means of truth. This, I repeat, does not mean that the services of the criticism shall not be appreciated, or whatever it clearly proves shall not be frankly welcomed; but that its grave conclusions and damaging suggestions against the high authority of the Old Testament shall be rejected until they are shown to be arrived at by legitimate methods, and sustained by adequate evidence. Such brief reference to this criticism

as may do a little to safeguard the historic truth already ascertained will be enough for our purpose.

On historic truthfulness rests the chief evidence of proper inspiration and authoritative guidance. If the Bible be not historically true, it cannot be a revelation in any sense worth caring about. Veracity gone, all is gone for which the Bible is most prized. All attempts to persuade ourselves that its surpassing value will remain, however plausible, are but sophistic and self-delusive efforts to believe the superstructure will be safe when the foundation is undermined.

Once admit that the Old Testament, with the exception of the barest stem or outline, or some scattered fragments, is fictitious, abounding in historical mistakes, errors, discrepancies, anachronisms, myths, self-contradictions, and legendary folk-lore, and it becomes impossible for it to be the medium of imparting a special revelation from God on paramount subjects. At once "inspiration drops down to a low and ignominious plane. . . . No wonder there is a cry from those who follow the critics that the doctrine of inspiration must be recast. Yes, downcast." *

1. Some of the *principles and methods of argumentation*

* Israel E. Dinwell, *Moses and Recent Critics*, p. 279.

It is contended by some, who wish to agree with the critics and yet to retain faith in the Bible, that fictions, such as the accounts of the origin of the world and man, of the deluge, the patriarchs, the plagues, and the exodus are alleged to be, might be God's inspired medium of communicating truth. But it is far less probable that He should choose fictitious narratives for His vehicle than that He should employ veracious ones. It is harder to believe the former is the voice of God than the latter. At any rate, inspiration would seem to be more necessary to make fiction the vehicle of truth from heaven, than to make historic narrative the vehicle. Thus, on this hypothesis, the necessity for inspiration is greatest where it is least likely to exist.

in vogue among the school of critics to which I allude give us reason to pause before accepting their sweeping results.

(1) Some of the more prominent critics make no attempt to conceal their invariable antipathy to the *supernatural* in the events of the Old Testament. It could not be otherwise with those whose starting-point does not admit of a personal God, or of a God who can intervene directly in His own world.* Of course, if a critic may take to the Old Testament a preconception of God, or of nature, which precludes the possibility of miracle, he will have no difficulty in proving much of the books unhistoric. But his criticism will have no cogency for those who dissent from his basal principle. All his show of reasoning will hang on a false assumption. Instead of adapting his theory to the facts, he adapts the facts to his theory and calls the operation criticism.

(2) The critics habitually, and almost ostentatiously,†

* It was very strange to see so acute a writer as Prof. Cheyne, in the *Contemporary Review*, August, 1889, expressing surprise that opponents should say Kuenen and Wellhausen would not admit the supernatural. I thought their strong naturalistic bias was too manifest to admit of doubt. They may believe in a supernatural Being; but miracles they seem to rule out of court. Their readiness to pronounce a passage legendary or unhistoric, for no other reason apparently than that it narrates a supernatural event, may be traced too easily along the whole course of their criticism. In his Introduction to Kuenen's *Prophets and Prophecy in Israel*, Dr. Muir holds that Kuenen enables the reader "to demonstrate satisfactorily the insufficiency of the grounds on which the supernatural character of prophecy has been assumed, and to justify the conclusion that the phenomena can be accounted for—without a resort to the supposition of any miraculous intervention—by the genius and the peculiar religious character of the Hebrews." (See also chapters xi., xii. of the same work; and Wellhausen's *History of Israel*, pp. 203–209, 429, 430, 436–439.) What else led Delitzsch to proclaim that on the question of the supernatural there was a great gulf between himself and a certain class of the critics?

† E.g. *Hist. Israel*, translated 1885, p. 365.

rely on the argument *e silentio*; e.g. if some things are inserted in the ceremonial laws of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers which do not appear in Deuteronomy or Ezekiel, it is inferred that those laws could not have come into existence until after the writing of Deuteronomy or Ezekiel; as if silence on a matter were tantamount to ignorance or denial. A system depending on this habit of reasoning from silence in matters of such moment is not likely to inspire us with confidence in its results.*

(3) A ruling principle in the criticism is that the religion of the Israelites was an *evolution* from the simple and rudimentary to the complex and mature, being in its lowest form in the time of Moses, and its highest in the post-exilian "priestly code." The dates and authorship are made to square with the requirements of this theory. The loose state of religion in the time of the Judges is taken as proof that a more systematic and national worship had not then been prescribed; whereas it is easy to understand that the laxity was in gross *neglect* of the law previously given by Moses.

No doubt the principle of development was at work; but to no such extent, nor with such uniform direction, as the theory supposes. The course of the Church, like that of the nation of Israel, was checkered by many lapses and recoveries, seasons of rebellion, decay, and return to God and prosperity. To assume that the priestly system was the outgrowth of a thousand years, and took its mature form at the end and not at the beginning of that period,

* The argument from silence is diligently plied by Dr. Martineau, after the manner of Kuenen and Wellhausen, in his attack on the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospels; e.g. *Seat of Authority*, pp. 195, 196-199.

and then to decide dates, authorship, and meaning of the Old Testament in conformity with that assumption, is a process to be distrusted.

(4) It relies too much on its *subjective* test of historicity. It is no uncommon thing for the critic to dismiss a passage from its place as an interpolation or transposition from a different author for no objective reason, but because the critic's mind so dictates, which may be the conscious or unconscious application of the foregoing principles. The subjective test, though often useful, is too equivocal to be the decisive touchstone of the truth of Scripture. Style is a matter on which the acutest judge may easily make mistakes; and it is unsafe to shuffle the texts of Scripture according to his subjective standard, or, except in some manifest instances, according to his acquaintance with the peculiar styles of the writers.*

(5) It belongs to this branch of the critical art again to deliberately *exclude the teaching of the New Testament* on the truth and authority of the Old. That powerful witness would seal the fate of the criticism. And no sufficient cause has been shown for ruling it out. The attempts of Paulus, Bauer, Strauss, and others to disprove the historic truthfulness of the New Testament failed signally, though now and then the contrary is airily taken for granted.

Professor Kuenen refuses to hear the evidence of the New Testament, on the plea that to do so would not be according to his "dearly bought scientific method." But however "scientific" he may deem the method of his school, if we must make our choice, not between "Christ and criticism," but between the criticism which includes

* See Cave's *Battle of the Standards*, p. 31.

and that which excludes the witness of Christ and the apostles, our decision is swift and safe. Away with the one-sided method which refuses the best possible guidance, but leave us the testimony of "the Light of the world" to the value of "Moses and the prophets and the psalms."

2. In some important respects the criticism may be pronounced a *failure*; especially in those which vitally affect the historic truthfulness, and consequently the superhuman authority, of the Old Testament.

(1) It has failed to prove the *mythical* character of the *Pentateuch*. I am aware that some apologists give up the historicity of the Mosaic cosmogony; but I am not aware of any sufficient ground for their surrender, nor do I see how their new position can be compatible with the teaching of other parts of Scripture on the subject. Natural science may have compelled us to modify to some extent our *interpretation* of the opening chapter; it has furnished no proof that God did not create and form the world as there stated. The amount of agreement between modern science and Genesis is so marvellous, as to create a presumption of absolute agreement in the light of fuller knowledge. The "higher criticism" however does not profess to rely on natural science so much as on the contents of the book itself. But great numbers—I suppose the vast majority—of conservative critics find no insuperable difficulty in the record when they take it for history. The critics do not strengthen their cause by referring to the traditions of creation in the mythology of ancient heathen nations. Those accounts contain enough resemblance to confirm the verisimilitude of the Mosaic account, and to make it probable that their most credible elements may have come

from the same source as the story of Genesis. But they contain nothing to favour the suggestion of the critics that the original source was in heathen mythology. The mythological accounts of such nations as Babylon and Assyria are evidently corrupted traditions of mundane and human beginnings; while the Mosaic statement is consistent with itself, with the rest of the Bible, and with our knowledge of nature, admitting of rational belief as true history.

At the same time, to avoid confusion, it is needful to distinguish between fiction and figure of speech. Rigid literalism is not always necessary to historical writing. For example, the eloquent lament of David over Saul and Jonathan is highly figurative, but not fictitious. So the literary form of the first chapter of Genesis is figurative, but not for that reason unhistorical. The brooding of the Spirit, the eduction of light, God looking on what was done, and issuing creative fiats, are highly figurative descriptions—nevertheless descriptions of *facts*.

(2) The criticism has also failed to prove that the far greater portion of what it calls the *Priests' Code* was of *post-exilian* origin. Its right to cull the more sacerdotal portions of the Pentateuch, and treat them as a separate and much later work than other portions, is highly disputable, and the process is open to the charge of mutilation.

That "code" fits in with the circumstances of the wilderness much better than with those of the exile. Its Mosaic origin agrees with the traces of it in other early historical books, with the references in later parts of the Old Testament and in the New, with the advanced state of intelligence and the religious cultus amongst contemporary

nations at the time of the exodus, and with the plain marks of credibility on its face. It also disagrees with the state and condition of the Jews at the period of the exile; for the post-exilian theory supposes that the priests and their abettors persuaded the Jewish people to accept as the law of Moses, and as the cultus of their nation from its beginning, what was produced many centuries after the age of Moses, and completed in their own age, and that the priestly party induced them to submit themselves strictly to the new concoction as if it were delivered from heaven a thousand years before. It implies, further, that the people, emerging from captivity, and eager to see the ancient system of their ancestors re-established, were made to believe there was a Mosaic tabernacle, with its ordinances, central worship, feasts, and priestly paraphernalia, for many centuries, while, in fact, it had never existed. And yet these very concocters, so cunning and clever as to invent the new system and foist it on the nation, were stupid enough to intermix their accounts with easily detected contradictions; and stranger still, they were highly patriotic and devoutly religious.

To argue, as the extreme Grafians do, that Deuteronomy was produced (in the seventh century B.C.) long before the "priestly code," because it is silent on many matters found in the latter, is, as already indicated, inconclusive. The repetitions and modifications in Deuteronomy, on the eve of entering the promised land, had no need to include all the particulars given thirty-eight years before at Horeb and in the wilderness, any more than St. John's Gospel had to repeat all that had been said in the synoptists. Assuming that the great body of the Pentateuch was

written by the same man, Moses or a contemporary scribe, the natural course for him in the circumstances was not to repeat the details he had already set down in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. His silence is no proof of ignorance.

(3) Like all preceding attempts, the endeavour of the criticism has failed to *discredit the morality* of the Old Testament. To point out the wrong-doing or base motives of persons who figure in the book, or the sins of "God's favourites," is no disproof of the high moral character of the record, or of the pure ethical principles it seeks to inculcate. In ages when the scheme of revelation was but partially developed, and the moral education of the chosen people was incomplete, it might well be that some ethical principles were not so fully known or so strictly enforced as they were in "the dispensation of the fulness of times." But all that is compatible with the historic truthfulness and ethical purity of the Old Testament, whose messengers, in the name of God, with singular force and comprehensiveness, denounce all immorality, and demand "truth in the inward parts."

Assuming that the imprecatory psalms express Divine purpose rather than human resentment, which accords with the true idea of inspiration, the charge of immorality falls to the ground.* The record faithfully reports, but never approves, the selfishness and deceit of persons who, in the main, were upright and devout.

(4) It has also failed to make good its charge of *falsehood* and *contradiction* against the Old Testament. On close examination the alleged fictions have generally turned out

* See p. 63, *supra*.

to be facts, and the contradictions have vanished. Any scraps of outside matter, which there is reason to think have crept into the text and disagree with it, may at present be left out of consideration. A self-contradiction at once affirms and denies the same thing. It implies in the case before us that two statements affecting to be from the same authority contradict each other—that if one be true, the other must be false. It is alleged that the Bible contradicts itself. If so, it is thereby discredited, and all the more since it professes to be a message from God. The effect is fatal, and cannot be neutralized by attempts to reconcile much of the book with essential truth. If it be self-contradictory, the Bible cannot be retained as a Divine guide on questions of supreme moment. The dilemma is not escaped by saying the contradictions do not affect doctrine or morals; for these rest largely on the veracity of the history, and who can draw the line between the portions which teach these and the rest of the book?

In a case of apparent imperfection in a number (*e.g.* 1 Sam. xiii. 5) or a name (*e.g.* 2 Sam. xxi. 19), a possible slip of the memory in narrator or copyist not affecting the history or teaching (as Matt. xxvii. 9, Jeremiah for Zechariah), or of an obscure sentence, there may be nothing detrimental to the truthfulness of the documents. But in the narration of events—the very substance of the Old Testament—real self-contradiction would destroy the trustworthiness of that by means of which doctrine and duty are revealed. If the statements in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are fiction posing as fact, and if one account of David contradicts another, what becomes of the authority of the books of which these statements are important parts? The

untrustworthiness of the history involves the ruin of the doctrine and the ethics.

It is needful to observe that, if there be self-contradiction and falsehood in the Bible, the fatal consequences are by no means avoided by the explanation of the critics, that it results from the jumbling together of portions from various sources. Rearrange the materials as we like, the contradictions and fictions remain somewhere within the same Bible, vitiating its claim to a Divine origin, and even to authenticity. The alleged fabrications, too, are so glaring and on so large a scale, that, whether called fraud or not, they are incompatible with the claim to be a message from the God of truth.

Despite the customary contempt of the critics for the "harmonists," it is remarkable how the contradictions disappear under the influence of careful hermeneutics. Biblical faith has much more to fear from superficial and easy-going acceptance of the results of adverse criticism than from searching examination on the part of believers.

It must not be forgotten that our inability to be certain of any particular explanation is no proof that the contradiction is real. But the explanation suggested may suffice to show that we are not shut up to admit the contradiction. Though it may not be the true answer, it may prove that we do not know enough to aver a contradiction. And even where we can suggest no satisfactory answer, it is still reasonable to hold that, in dealing with a history so highly accredited, it becomes us to wait for further light under which apparently discrepant statements may be harmonized.*

* See Appendix II.

(5) The criticism has failed to invalidate the *witness of Christ and His apostles* to the authority of the Old Testament. To contend that the New Testament is untrue, because it accepts for facts what the critics hold to be fictions in the Old Testament, so obviously inverts the order of reason as to render refutation superfluous. It first takes the Old Testament to be unveracious, and then condemns the New for regarding it as veracious, instead of ascertaining the character of the older by the testimony of the later, more detailed, and better known collection. This *à priori* process, beginning with the older record, would turn all history into confusion. So long as we accept the witness of the New Testament, we must believe in the historic truthfulness of the Old. Nor have the critics discredited that clear and powerful witness. The teachings of the New Testament concerning the Old remain more convincing than the arguments by which the extreme critics would persuade us to distrust that teaching.*

3. *Attempts at compromise.* It is not surprising that apologists in their eagerness to reconcile Christian faith

* It is one of the critical assumptions, that the literature and civilization of the earlier theocratic ages were so meagre and undeveloped, that the portions of Scripture assigned to that period could not have been produced so early. Modern Assyriology, Egyptology, and Oriental exploration have cut the ground from under this position, by discovering that nations contemporary with and prior to Moses were advanced in literature and other branches of intellectual culture, besides confirming many facts recorded in the Old Testament. "The assumption was that writing was unknown to the Israelites, or even to the Canaanites, in the age of the exodus : . . . what it (Egyptian and Assyrian research) has done has been to show that the extreme scepticism of modern criticism is not justified, that the materials on which the history of Israel has been based may, and probably do, go back to an early date, and that much which the 'higher critics' have declared to be mythical and impossible was really possible and true."—Prof. Sayce, *The Expository Times*, October, 1891.

with some extreme and, as they think, undeniable conclusions of the critics, seem willing to pay a ruinous price. They capitulate too soon, and on unsatisfactory terms.

(1) To do so, in the first place, may involve a resort to explanations more casuistic than convincing. That the authors who penned fiction for history, and professed to give a faithful account of the life and times of Moses, at the same time knowing their statements originated centuries after the exodus, who matured the sacerdotal system of the Pentateuch a thousand years after the time of Moses, and imposed it on the chosen people as his legislation under Divine direction, were not untruthful or intending to deceive; that they only attributed to Moses, perhaps unconsciously, the full-blown system of which he knew nothing beyond its smallest germ, though, on comparison, the germ is found to be alien to the mature plant; that they found in myth the germ of history (*Lux Mundi*, p. 356); that in a way utterly unsuitable to the New Testament they indulged in "unconscious idealizing of history, the reading back into past records of a ritual development which was really later" (*ibid.*, p. 353); and all this under Divine inspiration,—is, alas! one of the solutions offered for our satisfaction.* But at what a cost to our faith in the morality of the books!

(2) It is a further part of the price to be paid, that the doctrine of inspiration must be accommodated to the Old Testament as represented by the critics. Granting it to be fictitious and self-contradictory, the notion of its inspiration, if retained at all, must be lowered into agreement with those qualities; the question being, "how much may

* See *Lux Mundi*, second edition, pp. 353–356 *passim*.

legitimately, and without real loss, be conceded."* We are told supernatural inspiration was the religious consciousness of the Jewish race and its interpretation by the prophets. It was the animating motive of their work, and in the historian it was the interpretation of God's ways. St. Paul was inspired when he wrote erroneously in First Thessalonians. But what is any inspiration worth which admits of wholesale and systematic misrepresentation of persons, times, occasions, and origins, such as the critics attribute to Old Testament writers? And what if we still believe that St. Paul in First Thessalonians did *not* teach the immediate appearance of Christ in the flesh? †

We are told inspiration "means illumination of the judgment of the recorder"‡—alas, to how small an extent! Is this the inspiration which made the message Divine? Was it only thus the Scriptures were God-breathed, and consequently able to make wise unto salvation, and to equip the man of God completely for every good work? (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.) Did St. Peter mean only this when he said, "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost," and so produced the "prophecy of Scripture"?

(3) Another consequence may be dishonour done to the Divine-human Person, who is allowed to have endorsed the authenticity and authority of the Old Testament.

In explaining away the effect of that endorsement, it is

* *Lux Mundi*, p. 361.

† See Preface to the *Early Religion of Israel*, by Dr. James Robertson, Baird Lecture, 1892—a contribution of great value to the study of the Old Testament.

‡ *Lux Mundi*, p. 354. So Prof. Cheyne: "Of course the Chronicles are inspired, not as the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, but as even a sermon might be called inspired; *i.e.* touched in a high degree with the best spiritual influences of the time" (*The Expositor*, April, 1892, p. 261).

found necessary, at least in one kind of solution, to suppose that He was ignorant and liable to speak in error. That some things might not be within His finite knowledge He Himself intimated (Mark xiii. 32). But it is a very different thing to say He *spake* and *taught* in ignorance and error. On "that day or that hour," He, at the time, taught nothing; but He did teach something about Moses and the prophets in what He said respecting them. Unquestionably when He taught, as when He suffered, it was as the one Divine-human Person, and therefore always accurately.

If He taught sometimes with Divine infallibility, and again in human ignorance and error, how are we to distinguish when it was the one and when the other? And if we cannot distinguish, all becomes uncertain. When He informs us that He is the promised Messiah, that He will raise the dead and judge the world, and that He was before Abraham, how can we be certain it is not His finite fallible nature speaking in ignorance and error, quite as much as when He speaks of Moses, David, and Isaiah as the authors respectively of certain portions of the Old Testament? and what then becomes of the value of His teaching? The unity of His person gave unity and perfection to His words, as it did to His works. Nor did He ever profess to teach in His human capacity apart from the Divine. If He always taught as the Divine-human Prophet, how could He err in any of His teaching?*

Any κένωσις carried to the extent implied in this hypothesis might as well, for all the purposes of redemp-

* But for Canon Gore's disclaimer in the preface of the tenth edition of *Lux Mundi*, I should have agreed with those who took him to intend the above solution.

tion, be carried further, to the denial of our Lord's proper deity. Such emptying of Himself is incompatible with any true idea of His Godhead. Being God, He never could be anything less, though He could, and for a time did, veil His glory. Of necessity He was as truly and fully God during His deepest humiliation as before or after, notwithstanding that His perfection was less displayed. Any theory which would for a moment deprive Him of His essential, infinite perfection, in order to reconcile His teaching with what is alleged to be the unhistorical character of the Old Testament, or to meet any other exigency, contains the principle of its own condemnation.

Moreover the emptying appertained to the humiliation of the *Divine* nature, and therefore cannot explain the limitations of His finite nature. Professor Sanday suggests that "He 'condescended not to know.'"* But that, if admissible with regard to His Divine nature, would not meet the case; for (*ex hypothesi*) the matter to be explained is, not His ignorance, but His *speaking* and *teaching* ignorantly and erroneously. He took "a real humanity," but hardly "on the same footing with that of His fellow men" in point of "knowledge."† For, as Bishop Ellicott points out, His humanity was free from the intellectual faults incident to a sinful humanity, and was illumined by the special gift of the Holy Spirit.

Rather than accept a compromise so derogatory to the person and so disastrous to the mission of our Lord, it were better to suppose, what some apologists have already conceded, that Christ, though all-knowing, referred to the books of the Old Testament under the customary names

* *Oracles of God*, p. 111. † *Ibid.*

by which they were popularly known, without intending thereby to teach anything about their personal authorship. It is not impossible to hold this view, along with some of the more moderate contentions of the critics, and yet believe in the inspiration of the books and in the proper divinity and perfect infallibility of Jesus Christ. But this explanation also is burdened with improbability. It assumes that Christ's references were untrue to fact, which is not yet clearly proved. It is proposed as an expedient for harmonizing His words with some results of the "higher criticism." At least let us wait till the incorrectness of His references is established beyond doubt. The references are not categorical statements that the Pentateuch was the work of Moses, and certain psalms were David's, both acting under Divine authority; but they are explicit enough to carry that meaning, which therefore ought not to be set aside except under compulsion of evidence. Christ had no special motive to conform His teaching to what He knew to be error, and, in the absence of clear proof that He did so, the fair presumption is that He did not,—especially as in the scope of His arguments He had reason to be exact in naming the authorities to which He appealed. Even on the secondary matter of authorship, sufficient cause has not been shown for throwing over the word of Christ for that of the critics. But it is still more serious to make Christ openly endorse and honour the law while secretly well aware of its being produced in the way now alleged by the advanced critics. The hypothesis implies that Jesus referred to the Pentateuch and its laws as being of Divine origin and authority and claiming to have been

delivered by the hand of Moses, and at the same time well knew that many things in them, including narratives of the creation, the flood, the exodus, and the conquest of Canaan, were mostly legends; and that the accounts of the tabernacle, the central worship, and the sacerdotal system, with many other leading features, were the disingenuous work of the priestly party, chiefly about the time of the exile, put forward in order to promote their aggrandisement in opposition to the prophetic party. Is it possible that Christ, knowing all this, and much more of the same questionable character, about the Pentateuch, could appeal to its authority and observe its requirements as He did?*

* This last objection applies to the extreme views of the criticism combined with belief in Christ's omniscience. As to those who adopt more moderate conclusions respecting the Old Testament along with the theory of Christ's references above mentioned, I do not think they have completed their task of proving the theory.

With regard to the Davidic authorship of Ps. cx., the critics no sooner agree in repudiating the testimony of Christ (Matt. xxii. 42–46) than they differ greatly among themselves about the real author and date. Nor should it be overlooked that the connexion of David with the psalm affects the strength of our Lord's argument. If it was not David who called the Messiah "Lord," the truth of His being both Son and Lord of David could not be argued from that psalm as Jesus argues it. His speaking of the sun as rising and setting does not affect the soundness of His connected reasoning. To say, as has been done, that Christ spoke of the Davidic authorship of Ps. cx., and the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, in the same way as He did of the sun's rising and setting, is to miss the essential difference. The authorship of what He relied on in the Old Testament bore greatly on the cogency of His teaching. The theory of the solar system did not. Instruction on the former was germane to His subject and contributory to the faith of His disciples; not so on the latter. In the one case instruction on the Davidic authorship would be intelligible as part of His moral teaching; not so in the other on the solar system. The parallel to His speaking of David as the author of Ps. cx., secretly knowing he was not, would have been to speak of the sun as the cause of day, knowing it was some other luminary. The solar system is an acknowledged truth of science; the non-Davidic authorship of Ps. cx. is not. Sunrise and sunset are

For aught the criticism has proved, we may believe that the faith enshrined in the Scriptures, which in its infancy withstood the antagonism of priests, philosophers, and emperors, the attacks of Voltaire, Paine, the English deists, and the French Encyclopædists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and later of powerful continental rationalists—the faith which never had occasion to flinch before the new light of modern science or Oriental literature and archæology, bids fair to emerge from present-day criticism more than ever distinguished by the noble lineaments of truth.

unscientific forms of *expression*, but could not mislead on the subjects of Christ's teaching; to speak of David as the author of Ps. cx., if he were not, would tend to produce or confirm erroneous impressions with regard to the agent through whom the Scripture was given and to the value of its messianic teaching. What could the disciples understand from His words, but that He held David to be the author?

In respect of the Pentateuch, avoiding the extremes of the critics, we have no difficulty in receiving the witness of Christ to its being written by Moses, or under his ægis, and so closely identified with his mission that it could be quoted as the work of Moses.

As to the plural authorship of Isaiah, that, admitted, need make little or no difference to the authority of the book. But enough can still be said against that view to make wise men pause before accepting it. Taking for granted —what no one has a right to deny—that an inspired prophet might describe future events with as much detail as if he were living among them, though they had no setting in the actual affairs of his own time, there is nothing in the events of Isa. xl.–lxvi. which could not well have been written by the Isaiah of Hezekiah's reign. To give the name of Cyrus and the circumstances of the exile was easily within the competence of predictive revelation and inspiration under the influence of the Spirit who "testified beforehand" what should happen. Nor is there such difference of theological ideas or style as would suffice to dislocate the latter portion of the book, when due allowance is made for difference of themes and objects and probable lapse of years in the prophet's life. Prof. Kirkpatrick, while attaching importance to "the evidence of style and language and theological ideas," admits "they are not *in themselves* so convincing" (*The Divine Library*, p. 29). See *The Unity of Isaiah*, Dr. John Kennedy.

Similar considerations would apply to Zechariah.

After giving patient attention to the criticism, with all readiness to concede frankly whatever it clearly makes out, and allowing for some interpolations, chiefly explanatory, we may honestly and, I think, intelligently conclude that the Pentateuch is authentic history, written by Moses, or under his authority, whatever pre-existent materials might be appropriated, the last chapter being probably penned by the writer of Joshua; that the other historical books are credible history; that a considerable number of the Psalms are Davidic, and the rest by men divinely qualified; that the prophets, who were also in some degree historians, predicted future events unknowable by natural means; that Isaiah xl.–lxvi. might easily be from the same hand as the previous chapters, though if it were otherwise that would not disprove the Divine authority of either portion; that the Old Testament as a whole, in the original writing, the selection and incorporation of portions from other sources, and the arrangement of all in the form of the message which God designed for mankind, was inspired by the Holy Spirit in a sense peculiar to communications from heaven; and that therefore the Church to-day, as in ages past, may confidently use it, along with the New Testament, as revealing the mind of God for the salvation of men. Then, amid so many current tendencies to unsettle our faith by undermining its scriptural foundation, what is our rational course with the sacred word? To believe it as heartily as ever our fathers did.*

* Prof. Kirkpatrick goes far with the critics, yet finds it needful to say, "I am very far from thinking myself that the extreme views with regard to date and character of some of the books of the Old Testament which are now put forward in some quarters will long hold their ground in the face of sober criticism" (*The Divine Library*, p. 109).

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRACTICAL USE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

THAT the Scriptures were designed to be of the highest service to man may be inferred from their contents and their origin. What was their intended use in its main features, and their adequacy to it, is indicated by the end, sufficiency, authority, and inspiration already considered. Their proper use corresponds with their proper end and fitness thereto. Whatever their value as literature or ancient history, whatever the curious interest they awaken by their exceptional antiquity, or however they may benefit in secular affairs, their chief value consists in their being God's message to man by which he may attain his chief good.

1. *Source.*

They are our *source of Divine knowledge.* A law informs as well as commands. The Scriptures are not merely our touchstone, but our fountain of religious knowledge. They are to some extent, as Butler suggests, the "republication" of natural religion. But they are more; for they discover a great deal about which nature is silent concerning God, man, sin, redemption, ethics, the invisible world, and the future state, and that with an authority which inspires certainty. Whether we crave to under-

stand our relations to God or to one another, the meaning of our existence in this world or its bearing on our hereafter, the path of duty and blessedness or the long sought knowledge of man's *summum bonum*, the Scriptures are the great treasury of all we require. The height and breadth of their themes may well excite our emotions of curiosity and wonder; but in our lowly condition, awed, distracted, confused, hoping and despairing by turns under a strange consciousness of hidden possibilities, we welcome with tenfold interest a book which unveils the mysteries of our being and our relations to the Divine and eternal, spreading before us its immense wealth of knowledge for our free and confident appropriation—the wisdom which "cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof."

With Christ, the Revealer and the Revelation, for the centre of light and power, compared with which all other manifestations are pale and indistinct, it is not to be supposed that all parts of the Bible are equally luminous and instructive in Divine things, though all bear the impress of Divine sanction. The prophets pointed forward and the apostles backward to Him, as the centre and perfection of all theophanies. They were but bearers of the message; He was its author. They were the King's heralds; He was the King Himself come down to be "the Light of the world." It is therefore natural that the word should be most richly set with gems of saving truth where Christ is the speaker or the theme. Indeed, all the other parts are but the milder radiance of His manifestation.

The saving knowledge treasured in the Scriptures is complete, and yet ever progressive: complete, as it contains

all that is necessary to its purpose, admitting of neither addition nor diminution; progressive, as it continually exhibits to the devout student new depths of meaning. All truth is one. Therefore our later acquisitions of Bible doctrine agree with our earlier; but they often enable us to attain to clearer apprehension of the whole, and to present it in truer proportion and harmony. By improved introduction, textual criticism, and exegesis, by fuller comparison of Scripture with Scripture, and by more thorough examination, forgotten truths are recalled, errors are detected and eliminated, new aspects of revelation are discovered, and old-established doctrines expand themselves to our view; we trace out more clearly the articulation and mutual bearing of the various teachings; and thus Christian theology lives and grows with the growth of biblical knowledge. In this sense theology, like other sciences, among which it is rightfully queen, shares and promotes the general progress of intelligence.

One reason why all the truth of Scripture is not immediately grasped is the form in which it is presented. The Bible is not a series of categorical propositions, or a system of theology, but a miscellaneous collection. Much of its meaning is obtained by logical inference. Here we have a fact emitting sublime doctrine, there a didactic statement, and again a positive command; now a whole doctrine or moral precept definitely expressed, then its component parts to be gathered from several places and united by the careful reader; sometimes the teaching is explicit, and again implicit. Some places are clear to all from the first; others are "hard to be understood," until in the course of time new light falls upon them. Consequently a truth

lodged in the Bible from the first may be centuries or millenniums before it appears full-orbed and lucid. The growth of sound theology is not the old truth replaced by new, but the old continually augmenting and unfolding itself. If many cardinal doctrines are better understood in these modern times than they were in the patristic or mediæval, or if there is reason to hope future students of Scripture will attain to a theology more luminous than the best of to-day, it is in accordance with the principle of doctrinal development. But even now "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" accessible in the Scriptures open to us an opportunity equalled only by our responsibility. How much the age is indebted for its best thought and action to the light of Scripture cannot be estimated until, in addition to the direct effect of Scripture teaching, we take into account its innumerable reflex influences. As the warm sunlight fills the whole hemisphere, and penetrates many places not exposed to its direct rays, so the light of revelation, besides pouring copious streams directly on the cardinal questions of religion, intermingles itself in the general intelligence and powerfully affects the character of the times, though the unfailing abundance of the boon may tempt us to forget its source and our indebtedness. The fact of its surpassing worth comes home to our minds when we compare the religious and ethical state of a people to whom the sacred book is familiar with that of peoples wholly or partially ignorant of it. In the former, its distinct teaching of doctrine, supplemented by the interfusion of its ideas in the general current of thought and their entrance to a large extent into its very staple, makes all the difference between a barbarous or semi-barbarous

and a Christian public opinion. Thus from this small collection of sacred writings, as from a fruitful field, mankind may, by conscientious, diligent study, reap perennial harvests of truth and blessing.

2. *Standard.*

The end, sufficiency, authority, and inspiration of the Scriptures constitute them a standard of appeal on questions of Christian doctrine and duty. As the stream may be compared with its fountain in order to ascertain how far its contents have issued therefrom and how far they come from other sources, so may any system of theology or ethics calling itself Christian be tested by comparison with the fount of Christian teaching.

(1) Let me first *define and explain.*

It is less accurate to speak of the Scriptures as a *judge* of religious controversy than as a *standard.* *We* judge by the teaching of Scripture as our written law. The supreme Judge is God; but since He cannot be consulted on questions as they arise in the way that was possible to the prophets, His judgment is expressed beforehand in the permanent Scripture. By comparison with that as our authoritative guide we judge of the truth or falsehood of any doctrine purporting to be Christian.

In a different sense we may speak of *creeds* and *confessions* as rules of faith; that is, they are the formulated summaries and systematic statements of doctrines believed to be in the Bible, and often a convenient and useful way of presenting what is believed. By that means a Church may make itself better understood among its own members

and by others. The liability to confusion is diminished; the faith of that particular community is more clearly distinguished and can be more easily examined. The three creeds focus many lines of Christian faith for discussion, contemplation, or worship. But neither these great historical creeds nor any of the many masterly confessions of Christendom can rank as standards with holy Scripture. Their highest authority is ecclesiastical; its authority is Divine. They are fallible, though often very able, productions of men; it was produced under the control of the Holy Spirit. They derive their substance and virtue from it so far as they are true. Unlike it, they are not binding upon the conscience, except in an inferior degree by some conventional or human contract. In them we have human echoes of the message from heaven; in it we have the message itself.*

Nor is any man's *interpretation* infallible because the Scripture is so. He takes to it his imperfect faculties, his ignorance, and, it may be, his misleading preconceptions. His perception may be indistinct, his judgment biassed, or his reasoning faculty feeble; and at best there is no assurance of his inerrancy. He may see more than enough to save him, but cannot be certain he sees all. He drinks of

* Prof. Ladd seems to hold that the Scriptures are not the supreme rule, but contain the "norm" or materials out of which the "ethico-religious consciousness" or faculty of the Church, acquired "through her growing experience," derives and shapes the rule, somewhat after the mode of Newman's "development" of doctrine, without its profession of infallibility. But even so, the supreme authoritative test is in the Scriptures; and so far as the rule is educed and formulated by the Christian consciousness, it is only human and liable to err. If the contents of the Bible determine the rule, the supremacy remains with Holy Writ.—Ladd, *Doc. Script.*, vol. ii., pp. 592, 603, 599, 608, 609, 597. Edition of 1883.

the well of undefiled truth, but there is no certainty that what he imbibes is not immediately defiled by his misconceptions. His studies may bring him daily into clearer, but probably never into perfect vision. He may attain the insight and representative power of a great expositor or theologian, but never the qualification to teach with the accuracy and warrant of an apostle.

Consequently the Bible does not make an immediate and entire "end of controversy." That is not its aim. Contending appellants to Scripture often remain as wide apart after the alleged appeal as before. But the ground of their appeal is their common recognition of the inerrancy and supremacy of the standard. Each party blames the misapprehension or perversity of the other; neither charges the failure on the Scripture. It is therefore idle to expect that all controversies, with their complexities and entanglements, can be settled by the disputants glancing together at the Scripture, as they might agree on the time of day by looking at the hands of a clock. In the latter case it is only a question of the agreement of their eyes when fixed on the same object; in the former, it is a question of moral and intellectual fitness to examine, of collation and comparison of various passages, of the analogy of faith, of careful induction, and often of noting subtle distinctions, and not mistaking appearances for realities.

To investigate and judge conscientiously is as truly a part of our moral probation as to be honest in commerce. Had a standard been given, the sight of which would have compelled full and immediate assent to its doctrine, as in mathematics, that, I repeat, would have destroyed our moral agency in relation thereto. Such an arrangement

was incompatible with the very nature of moral evidence. The standard is perfect, but not our application of it.

Here we are reminded that the right use of the standard presupposes the use of "introduction," and any other help to the understanding of Scripture. Being largely historical in form, acquaintance with the geography, customs, language, and peoples of the Bible is a valuable aid to our study of the heavenly message. The primary allusions to contemporary things throw light on the wider significance of Scripture. Indeed, while moderate attention may gain for the reader enough to keep him in the safe path, he who would derive the greatest advantage must avail himself as far as possible of all side lights. Otherwise he will probably miss the historic perspective and the moral proportions of the book, interpreting words and statements without regard to their respective connexions, and thus receiving an untrue and therefore useless or mischievous impression. As with statute law, commentaries on Scripture may assist us to understand it, but cannot share or lessen its authority.

It goes without saying that the Scriptures cannot operate as the standard with those who have no opportunity of knowing them. They cannot be in force where the law of nature and non-Christian tradition are the only religious guides available. As faith is the condition of salvation only where the gospel may be known, so the Scriptures are the standard of Christian truth to those only who have the privilege of becoming acquainted with their teaching. Within those limits it is in the power of the disbeliever to refuse submission to their authoritative guidance.

No doubt under pretext of the rule of faith the Bible has been often abused. Texts have been strung together

in proof of some foregone conclusion without regard to the occasion, scope, or connexion. The book has been made a kind of consulting oracle on private affairs by methods too much like a lottery. Texts have been construed according to their sound or appearance rather than their sense, or perforce strained from their obvious meaning. But are we to fling away a valuable instrument because some men know not how to use it? What good thing in human hands has not been abused? Our wise course is to preserve the gift to its legitimate use.

As each individual is required to conform to the standard, he has a right to some opportunity of comparing himself with it. Hence, while each Church does well to employ the rule in determining the ecclesiastical formulæ by which its members or teachers become voluntarily and mutually bound so long as they choose to continue in its communion, it is also the duty and privilege of the *individual* Christian to make use of the same guide. For if Christian truth is to be the law of his life according to which he will be finally judged, he has surely a right to test himself by the criterion of that truth, if there be one. To deprive him of it is to rob him of more than gold and silver. And if others have no right to take it from him, neither can he on his part renounce his right without also forsaking his duty. Individual responsibility connotes the impossibility of shuffling off the obligation to know and obey the rule of duty. If a man be weak or wicked enough to barter away his privilege and ignore the duty of consulting the standard of truth and righteousness in exchange for any ecclesiastical soporific to his conscience, let him be aware that the sovereign Judge is no party to the bargain.

(2) *Subject to be tested.* That in relation to which Scripture is the standard is our *faith and practice.*

To begin with *practice*, Christian ethics have essentially a religious basis. Any religion which does not dominate morals cannot have come from or lead to the God of holiness. It is matter of experience that many men, environed by incentives to wrong-doing, with which their carnal mind is in affinity, are sadly deficient in both precept and motive to do right. Their moral intuitions alone are no match for the forces of evil. The religion of the Bible does not create the moral intuitions; but it supplies three things without which they would be inadequate—comprehensiveness, direction, and motive power.

In contradistinction to mere patriotism, it demands justice and benevolence towards all—philanthropy. It condemns all oppression of one class or sex by another, and insists on the brotherhood of all men. It has no countenance for the utilitarianism whose ultimate test of righteousness is its supposed benefit to the individual or to the "largest number." It refuses to make the sum of ethics the behaviour of man to man, and includes his attitude and conduct towards God, enjoining on every man to "do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God."

Its directive precepts are plain and abundant, "line upon line, and precept upon precept." Meekness, lowliness, courage, fortitude, justice, truth, faithfulness, love, sympathy, compassion are, with it, necessary virtues, to be accompanied by corresponding deeds. Its golden rule of doing to others as one would be done to is supplemented and illustrated by numerous directions in detail.

As to motive power, it provides that our morality shall spring out of love to God and man. It will not approve any deed as thoroughly good where this motive is wanting. As it will not have deeds without love, neither will it have the profession of love without corresponding proof in deeds.

There is a school of thought that would, while assenting to such morality, ignore *faith*, losing sight of the fact that, in both Scripture and experience, the best deeds are founded in "faith working through love." This error is largely due to misapprehension of the nature of faith. It is mistaken for opinion, or a mere concept of the intellect; whereas it is in the highest degree moral, a matter of will, and containing the germ of all Christian virtue. The faith of which the New Testament makes so much is pre-eminently ethical. It always implies a personal object, and is the act or state of a personal subject. Its place is at the very seat of personality. No man can believe against or without his will. Moreover, it is a powerfully *operative* principle on the moral dispositions and actions, and by this is distinguished from a dead faith, which even devils possess. Only on the ground of its intensely ethical nature can we understand why to believe is so strongly approved and to disbelieve is so strongly condemned, and why it is made the key-stone of salvation.

This is subjective faith; but in speaking about the rule of faith we mean faith rather in its *objective* aspect, that is, the rule of what is to be believed. The proper object of saving faith is Christ; but as He is presented to us only through means of the *doctrine* of Christ, that doctrine is also viewed as the object of faith. To believe in the doctrine of Christ savingly is to believe in Him. This is

"the faith once for all delivered to the saints," and to be earnestly contended for (Jude 3).

Doctrine however is the element which many seem most eager to eject from Christianity. Its morals they applaud, but its doctrine they dislike as an imposition or a needless excrescence. The antipathy to all doctrine preposterously overlooks its surpassing importance. The value of true doctrine may be measured by the evil of false, and again by the high order of the subjects to which it relates. True doctrine on the relations of man to God is of paramount concern, especially when apprehended by that ethical faith which makes it dominant over character and destiny. The chief importance of the history is its reflection of doctrine. In the height of their moral earnestness the primitive Christians "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." To "know of the doctrine, whether it be of God," is a rich gift from heaven (John vii. 17). The Apostle Paul thanked God that the Roman Christians "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered them." Why did he insist through Timothy "that they teach no other doctrine," and that Timothy should "take heed to himself, and to the doctrine," which would "save" himself and his hearers? (1 Tim. iv. 16). "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God" (2 John 9, 10; *cf.* Titus i. 9, ii. 1; 1 Tim. i. 10, iv. 6). To deprive Christianity of its chief doctrines is to emasculate it. The doctrine without the ethics is a barren tree; the ethics without the doctrine is as impossible as the fruit without the tree; the doctrine grasped by living faith produces loving obedience. Consequently, to ascertain the rule of faith is to ascertain the rule of practice.

A creedless religion must grope in thick fog, fancying things that are not, and missing things that are. Firm belief of a sound creed is a clear grip of realities.

No ethical system is worthy of the name which has not God for its Alpha and Omega. But as no other conception of God is comparable with the Bible doctrine of Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the morality which arises from that doctrine is, in the same proportion, the best. Between Him and those that serve Him there is conscious, mutual intercourse. The atheist, lacking this relation, lacks the object necessary to a high moral order. The pantheist, the polytheist, and all whose gods are incapable of this relation, cannot rise to the highest plane of ethical principle.

But as Jehovah is invisible to sense, the intercourse is by means of *faith*, which alone makes Him real, visible, and influential to us: "Whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. i. 8). What but this vision of faith could account for the devotion and philanthropy of St. Paul, of John Howard, of Wesley, of John Hunt, of Livingstone, and millions more who attained to an attitude of virtue peculiar to Christian character? The truest and noblest morality is the product of faith under the guidance of Scripture doctrine. To divorce faith from morals is to destroy both. To do away with doctrine is to reduce faith to a superstition.*

* In the *Manchester Guardian* of January 27, 1890, Mr. J. Moncure Conway gives an account of "The Ethical Society" formed in America by Dr. Adler, an ex-Judaist, for the promotion of morals without doctrine, choosing for its motto, "Deeds, not Creeds." It might as appropriately

Impatience of doctrine, forgetting its vitalizing power, cries, "Christianity is a *life*." True; but a life "by the faith of the Son of God"—faith in the *written* doctrine: "These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name" (John xx. 31). It is said to be a *new birth*. True again; but it is so by means of believing the doctrine: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John v. 1). We are told it is *salvation*. Of course it is; but it is that through "belief of the truth" (2 Thess. ii. 13). It is proclaimed to be *freedom*. Granted; but "the truth shall make you free" (John viii. 32). It is declared to be the doing of *good deeds*. Precisely; but the man of God is made "complete," and "furnished completely unto every good work," by the "doctrine," "reproof," "correction," and "instruction which is in righteousness," given in the God-breathed Scripture (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17).

Our position then is that, according to the will of God, holy Scripture is the supreme standard to which every doctrine and moral act claiming to be Christian must conform, and by which they are to be tested. This is what we mean by the rule of faith and practice.

(3) *Hypothesis of no standard.* If Christianity is to energise our powers and mould our character after its own design, the obstinate conflict of belief on vital questions, and the necessity of more solid certainty than nature affords, show that some better standard than nature is

have called itself "The Irrational Society," and selected for its motto, "Effects without Causes"—especially if the intention be to exclude the doctrine of Scripture, which is the embodiment of all it is necessary to believe in order to salvation and Christlike virtue.

indispensable. Yet, strange as it may appear, one now and again hears it suggested that we neither have nor require any such standard. The antipathy to ecclesiastical creeds and symbols swells up to the pitch of renouncing the God-inspired word as the sure criterion, or it may sometimes result from that desire for license of thought by which the limitations imposed by truth are mistaken for an enemy to freedom.

It would be equally reasonable to propose that a nation should have no fixed, known laws, or that a mariner should have no chart or compass. To impose on man obligations, with no certain rule by which to know them, does not accord with our ideas of the Divine government. Had it been so, I again ask, what could have roused and rescued the Church from corruptions at different times and places, from mediæval degradation, from the lifeless moralism of Anglicanism in the seventeenth century, from the latitudinarianism which sapped the orthodoxy of the Scotch Church, and the gross indifference which prevailed at the rise of Methodism? From these deadly slumbers the people were aroused by the trumpet-blast of the word, giving no uncertain sound.

Hardly any non-Christian religion of any magnitude has ventured to do without some professedly Divine standard, and mostly its form has been literary.* Islam has its *Qu'rân*; Hinduism, its *Vedas* and *Shastras*; Buddhism, its *Bana*, or *Bana Pot* (writings of Buddha which are worshipped); Taouism, the *Book of Wisdom*; Confucianism, the writings of its founder; Zoroastrianism, its *Avesta*; and

* The polytheism of ancient Greece was an exception. See Gladstone, *Impregnable Rock.*

Mormonism its *Book of Mormon*. For Christianity to let go its rule of faith, with its incomparable credentials, would be self-destructive.

(4) *Proof.*—(*a*) That in the Scriptures we have the rule of faith and practice follows from their end, sufficiency, and authority already ascertained. For if their purpose is to make known God and the way of salvation, if they contain all that is necessary for that purpose, and if what they say on the subject bears the imprimatur of the "Father of lights," the consequence is unavoidable that they supply our need in that respect, and lay us under obligation to receive their teaching as decisive. Whatever our mistakes or disputes concerning their meaning, so long as they have these characteristics, all other teaching in the name of Christianity must be held true or false as it agrees or not with theirs. Such a collection of books cannot but be an authoritative criterion of truth in the subjects on which it pronounces.

(*b*) In the New Testament, the Old Testament Scriptures are treated as the Divine rule of faith and practice. On a matter of doctrine, an appeal to their teaching was deemed by Christ and His apostles decisive. By this method Jesus silenced the Sadducees and Pharisees (Matt. xxii. 19, 34, 40, 41, 46). If their falsehoods were to be exposed and the deeper principles of ethics laid bare, if the tempter was to be repulsed or the disciples instructed, the appeal was to Old Testament Scripture as the "commandment of God." To find a doctrine "written" there meant its acceptance, as fully as if it had been spoken audibly from the skies.

The apostles relied on the same authority. "What

saith the Scripture?" was a reference to a decisive standard. St. Paul felt his course of action was amply vindicated when he could declare he had preached "nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come" (Acts xxvi. 22), or that it was "according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3; Acts xvii. 2, 3). Nay, the words of Scripture are quoted as the voice of the Spirit (Heb. iii. 7; Acts xxviii. 25). While believing "all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets" (Acts xxiv. 14), the apostles never refer to any other writings in like manner, or regard their own teaching as amenable to any books but the "theopneustic Scripture." What in the previous mystery was "manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets" "made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith," was "according to the commandment of the eternal God" (Rom. xvi. 25, 26).

But the New Testament Scriptures being of the same origin and character as the Old, in fact, their continuation and completion, the two closely related parts making one whole, the entire book is to us what the earlier part was to believers before the later came into existence. This was St. Peter's idea when he wrote: "This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you; . . . that ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles" (2 Pet. iii. 1, 2); and when he commended St. Paul's epistles as written by the wisdom given unto him, and holding coequal rank with "the other Scriptures" (2 Pet. iii. 15, 16). Few, excepting antichristian Jews, will claim a higher status for the Old Testament Scriptures than the New.

(*c*) The same office and use of the Scriptures may be gathered from themselves in various places. Like Jesus, they speak "as one having authority." They *command* as well as guide. The later portions assume the authoritative style of the earlier. In the controversy with wizardry Isaiah wrote, "To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them" (Isa. viii. 20). Who but one writing Divine law could adopt the following language? "For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith" (Rom. xii. 3). "I command, yet not I, but the Lord"; "But to the rest say I, not the Lord" (1 Cor. vii., new legislation). "I write the more boldly unto you in some measure, as putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me of God" (Rom. xv. 15). "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. iii. 3, 4). "Hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle" (2 Thess. ii. 15). "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed" (2 Thess. iii. 14). "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. iii. 6). "I will therefore that men pray everywhere" (1 Tim. ii. 8). "If any man teach a different doctrine, and consenteth not to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is puffed up,

knowing nothing" (1 Tim. vi. 3, 4). "I give thee charge in the sight of God, . . . that thou keep this commandment" (1 Tim. vi. 13, 14).

To what could St. Peter refer but to the Divine message, which for us exists only in the Bible, when he laid down the principle, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. iv. 11)? The only debatable point here is, to how much of our Bible he pointed as the then established rule of doctrine. The "word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed," is the "prophecy of *Scripture*" which "men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 19–21). Its nature, "prophecy," and its source, "the Holy Ghost," bespeak its Divine authority; and the "heed" due to its teaching bespeaks its use in regulating our faith and conduct. But in those respects the deliverances of the apostles are equal to those of the prophets. "First, apostles; secondly, prophets"—any inferiority of these New Testament prophets to those of the Old in other respects notwithstanding. The household of God is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." The ancient mystery was "revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit" (Eph. iii. 5), which agrees with the words of Jude, "But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ."

(*d*) It is the more reasonable to take the Scriptures for our standard, inasmuch as we shall be approved according as we conform to them. If he who knows the Divine will and does it not shall be beaten with many stripes (Luke xii. 47), he must have had opportunity of knowing what

his Judge required. But since the apostolic age, where can men learn the will of God but in the Bible, or in some reflection of its teaching? Our Lord predicts of the man who refuses Him and His sayings: "The word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John xii. 48), which may be taken to comprise all the words which come to us under His sanction. We are told of those who shall be condemned because they "obey not the truth" and "obey not the gospel." But where is that truth or that gospel, except in the Scriptures? Saints shall be judged by "the law of liberty." Now if the gospel in the Scriptures is that law, it is evidently a definite, ascertainable standard of what we are required to believe and do. "Sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. v. 13). We cannot afford to have the rule of Scripture frittered away because its meaning is disingenuously twisted by polemic sophistry, any more than we may cast away our statute laws because advocates sometimes miscontrue their meaning.

(*e*) In this respect the Scriptures stand *alone*. They alone combine the necessary qualifications of the standard required; namely, Divine intention and preparation, with sufficient and suitable information, backed by sufficient authority. Minus the intention and preparation, they could only be the rule by accident; minus such information, they would be unequal to their end; minus the authority, they could not enforce their message on the conscience. Having all these, they are a complete rule of faith.

Nowhere else do we find such completeness. It is not in the apocryphal writings of later Jews, or in those of early Christians. The moral teaching and religious spirit which

they contain here and there do not redeem them from puerilities, anachronisms, exaggerations, and weaknesses inconsistent with the exalted rank of a Divine rule.* Those of them which were extant at the time of writing the New Testament have no recognition there as authoritative. The ecclesiastical status given to some of them in later centuries as useful for reading in public worship did not invest them with Divine right or power. The noblest of all other literature draws its best teaching from the Bible. Even the Qu'rân shows unmistakable signs of great indebtedness to the same source. The sacred books of the heathen contain far too much of the absurd and the impossible to come into the comparison. The Bible, unique in its contents, its source, and its powerful credentials, is unique in its supreme control.

Still more marked is the distinction when we recollect how peculiarly the Old Testament is recognised in the New as the Scripture previously given; and how the New Testament was the exclusive work of apostles and apostolic men (like St. Mark the companion of St. Peter, and St. Luke of St. Paul), to whom the extraordinary qualification of the Spirit was given, and who thus held "the keys" of Christian doctrine. The "word of prophecy made more sure," being "a lamp shining in a dark place," implies that without it we should have no sufficient light on religious subjects.

(*f*) This supremacy of the Scriptures was always relied on in the Christian Church, not only by the Reformers and others who are called "ultra-Protestants" by some who might

* If St. Jude (ver. 14) refers to the apocryphal Book of Enoch, and even if he intends apostolic recognition of the prediction as originating with "the seventh from Adam," he does not thereby canonize the Book of Enoch in which the prediction had found a place.

more appropriately be called "semi-Romanists," but even by those very Fathers whose words the latter seem anxious to invest with a kind of Divine authority. Were some of those patristic authors now alive to see how their modern admirers would deify their often erroneous and fanciful writings, one thinks they would feel as St. Paul and St. Barnabas did when the ignorant Lycaonians mistook them for gods.

If the Fathers disputed on a doctrine or duty, all sides professed to be subject to the Scriptures, excepting some heretics who rejected the Scriptures so far as they were against their views, to meet whom the Fathers sometimes argued from tradition.*

The Scriptures therefore, being historically true, of Divine origin, and withal containing all things necessary for salvation, we build our faith upon them as the one everlasting rock of God's truth. In this sense the rules of the Wesleyan Methodist Church take them for "His written word, the only rule both of our faith and practice."

3. *Means of Grace for Spiritual Life.*

The use of holy Scripture however is by no means confined to the acquisition of religious knowledge and the

* *E.g.* Polycarp: "Neither can I, nor any other such as I am, come up to the wisdom of the blessed and renowned Paul, who . . . did with all exactness and soundness teach the word of truth." "Let us return to the word that was delivered to us from the beginning." So also Irenæus says the plan of salvation was "handed down to us in the Scriptures to be the ground and pillar of our faith." So Origen: "We must take the Scriptures as witnesses. For our doctrines and interpretations, without such witnesses, are not to be believed." "The Divine Scriptures, which alone ought to direct our judgment in such examinations." In the Council of Nicæa, as in later councils, the disputants were all anxious to fortify themselves by the authority of Scripture. See Hefele, vol. i., pp. 287–291.

testing of doctrine and conduct. Its more constant function corresponds with its practical and experiential ends; namely, to bring the sinner from death unto life, and to secure his full and eternal salvation. As the spoken words of Christ were "spirit" and "life" (John vi. 63), so His written word is "able to save your souls" (Jas. i. 21), "which also worketh in you that believe" (1 Thess. ii. 13), "that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4). The gospel in the Scriptures is thus ever proving itself *God's spell*, and His power unto salvation.

After begetting us into newness of life, the Scriptures are the aliment to nourish it, the familiar voice of our heavenly Father in His companionship with us, our *vade mecum* in the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, the struggles and triumphs of our pilgrimage. Their special business is with our character. Devout familiarity with them means that we have infinite wisdom for counsel, infinite power for safety and victory, infinite love for succour and repose to the troubled heart. Dwelling in the word of God, we think His thoughts, and our character is assimilated to His. The word is at once our charter of covenant blessing and our law of action. But only if we obey it. "But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing" (Jas. i. 25). It is God's irenicon to a rebel race; and at the same time its contents are the subject-matter of all evangelical preaching, and the means of spreading scriptural holiness.

Obviously the higher uses of holy Scripture are impossible

to him who has not passed the stage of inquiry into its sufficiency, and entered on that of conviction. He has not yet found firm footing for his confidence and hope. Only after accepting it heartily as the message of God can he appropriate its promises and build on it as an impregnable rock for time and eternity. Short of this, his experience may be the misery of being "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

As watchmen on the walls, apologists may look out for the enemy, and by their warnings guard the city against capture; but even they need to share with the citizens the sense of security. To draw saving truth from the word as the Divine source, to appeal to it as the supreme standard, and to consult it daily, as expressing the mind of God, in all the vicissitudes of life, presuppose that our minds are made up on its entire sufficiency for these great uses.

Compared with the wealth they contain however, the Scriptures are a mine only partially worked. Their power for awakening, converting, and purifying humanity, and for building it up in all moral excellence, has been utilized but in part. Who is to blame? Religious æsthetics, secular education, civil enactments, science, art, literature, social schemes, all well enough for their own ends, when substituted for Bible truth in the formation of character and the satisfaction of our deepest nature, are pitiful shifts, doomed to fail from sheer incompetency. Let us probe ourselves. The Church moans, "My leanness, my leanness," yet partakes scantily of the plenteous nourishment in the word. How comparatively little have we appropriated its spiritual store for better service of God and men! In our eagerness to follow the hue and cry after popular

literature, to pile up perishable riches, or to swim with the tide of social or political excitement, let us beware of neglecting the habitual use of that book of books from which radiates the light of heaven, and which tells of the inheritance destined not to pass away.

We Protestant Christians imprint on our banners, "The Bible, the Bible alone." How far is this an empty name? With that for our motto, why do we content ourselves with a smattering of Bible truth? Why do we instil so little of it into our children? Why do we read so much *about* it and so little *in* it? Why is its counsel so little regarded in the conception and execution of our schemes, in our home life and friendships, in our pursuits of pleasure and profit? Why are its principles not ingrained in our daily thoughts? If we are to keep clear of superstition on the one side and scepticism on the other, our practice must come nearer to our creed. We have too much diluted Bible in what passes for Christian teaching, too much adulterated Bible in a culpable mixture of God's truth and man's errors, too much distorted Bible, perverting its letter to doctrine abhorrent to its design, and too little fidelity to our Protestant watchwords.

The Scriptures used to the extent of their deserts and men's needs would mean:

(1) The Bible the *vade mecum* of the individual Christian in his private experience and service of God. He whose sun shines on every man that walks abroad, by His word speaks to every man within its reach. Who then is he, whether prince or priest, that dares to intercept the message? Having tasted death for every man, Christ also sends him the good tidings of it; for He "will have all

men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Never was the Bible so much studied by theologians and expositors as now; but it may be questioned whether its use in the cultivation of spiritual life keeps pace with the growth of intellectual criticism.

And where is the word more effectual than in secret communion with God? Prayer brings light upon the word, and the word throws light on prayer. The best moral attitude and mental fitness for searching the Scriptures is obtained at the throne of grace, in converse with their Divine Author; and the best guide to secret intercourse with God is the word of His grace. At leisure and alone with his Lord, the devout student reads the Scriptures through, and so the better grasps their scope, plan, and meaning, as well as by comparison of places gathers their unity of doctrine and purpose.

To him who knows how to use it, his Bible is the choicest field of meditation. His daily communion with it expands his views of God, of himself, of mankind, and of the universe. It braces his moral fibre, inciting and empowering him to aspire to perfection. If there be any danger in the private study of the Bible, it is greatest where the study is most intermittent and superficial. Its spiritual wealth is most accessible to devout, habitual pondering. Apparent discords melt into beautiful harmony. Here is a pensive threnody, there a song of rapture, now the tenor of inimitable narrative, then the swell of sublime contemplation, and again high notes of doctrine and precept; but all in concord. The various notes of prophecy, history, law, proverbs, parables, hymns, gospels, and epistles blend in a chorus of "Glory to God in the highest, and

on earth peace, goodwill among men in whom He is well pleased." But to hear the music and feel its exhilaration belongs to him who, being intent, keeps his soul *en rapport* with this matchless organ of the Revealer.

(2) The Bible in the *family*, the symbol and sustenance of its religion, its voice from heaven, its solace in grief, and its stronghold in temptation, the rule and safeguard of its morals, the standard of purity, the bond of unity and peace, the complement of the family altar, the oracle and guide of the household through the intricacies and perils of mortal life. Keeping its place there, it secures for the home, however exalted or humble, a light from heaven and an atmosphere of pure love.

(3) The Bible in the *Church* above all other places. Granted that "the main outlines of Christian faith and Christian duty are well understood independently of the interpretation of particular passages. They have entered into the life of the Church as a whole, and are handed on from age to age." * But if each "age" do not cultivate its own direct intimacy with the one source of saving knowledge, declension of faith and practice, such as men have too often seen, will be repeated. A high state of spiritual life in the Church requires, what the Scriptures provide for, not merely an indirect and general, but a close and immediate acquaintance with the truth therein contained.

It is matter of history that the seasons of high-water mark in holiness and gracious revival have been seasons of unusual Bible influence. In the great Reformation, the rise and spread of Methodism, and many other revivals, the Bible was the quickening instrument. Never without its

* Sanday, *Oracles of God*, p. 78.

diligent use can the Church preserve itself from disastrous inroads of false doctrine and low morals. It was in proportion as the Scriptures were pushed to the background that the Church sank into corruptness; and it recovered itself in proportion as it restored them to their seat of authority. However rich in things inferior, the Church minus acquaintance with the Scriptures suffers as from a famine of the word.*

In truth, they are "the foundation of the apostles and prophets," on which "the household of God" is built (Eph. ii. 19, 20). They were given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 12). But if that result is to be achieved, the text-book of the Church in the hands of both teachers and people must play a leading part in its work and worship. More easily could it spare its splendid buildings, æsthetics, organization, literature, wealth, and ecclesiastical grandeur, than the word of God. By this weapon it may vanquish the powers of darkness in the masses of Christendom, including its young life, and in the still wider and more benighted nations of heathendom. If the Church is to exert its due influence on the age, and bring on the latter-day glory, it must wield the power of Scripture to a degree far beyond anything yet attained. But this it can never do without that progressive knowledge of Scripture doctrine which comes by constant, careful study.

(4) The Bible supreme in *religious controversy*, commanding the cordial homage of inquirers, and of disputants on all sides, and so stopping or preventing much conten-

* See *The Authority of Scripture*, part iv., 2 (6), p. 133, *supra*; pp. 17, 67, 129, *supra*.

tious waste of energy. It will not stifle investigation or fetter honest thought, but, throwing its light on the path of ingenuous seekers, will guide them to the truth which makes them free. For Christian people the best bulwark against scepticism would be a thorough practical acquaintance with their sacred word. We are weak in its defence because we know too little of its contents, and too little test its principles in experience. To have it read and known of all men would be its most sure defence.

(5) The Bible in the *pulpit*, as "the sincere milk of the word," and the bread by which Christ bids His ministers feed the multitude. It is also the antidote to fanaticism and pseudo-Christianity. Nor can they who are sent to "preach the word" substitute any other teaching, however pleasing, without betraying their trust, and imperilling the souls they should save. "The man of God" is "furnished completely for every good work" by the inspired Scripture (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). Non-biblical themes cannot make wise unto salvation. The message of God alone can draw men from their wanderings and misgivings into "the good way," where "they shall find rest to their souls." And if the kingdom of Christ is not to be weakened or betrayed by those who are entrusted with its interests, but to advance from strength to strength and from conquest to conquest, the substance of what is preached must be the everlasting gospel, the inspired record being enthroned on the seat of instruction.

(6) The Bible in the *school* of whatever grade. If it is to leaven the manhood and womanhood of the race with wholesome principles, it must have more effective play in the Sunday school, neither crowded out by secular

themes nor perfunctorily handled, but intelligently explained and lovingly pressed home to the heart, for the right training of our teeming youth. Nor must it be banned in our primary or secondary schools, nor disparaged at the seats of learning, as if the only Divine book in the world were the least worthy.

(7) The Bible in the *nation*. The story of our sovereign pointing a New Zealand chief to the Bible as the secret of England's greatness may be unhistorical. The truth however remains that it *is* the secret. But for the Bible where had been our Protestant Christianity, and consequently our freedom, commerce, industries, wealth, prowess, civilization? where our home life, our honour, our truth, our philanthropy? It leads to the righteousness by which a nation is exalted. Where it does not reform it restrains, and it diffuses among all classes moral principle. Even many who deny its claim, or blaspheme its character, are not devoid of its benefits. Owned or disowned, it penetrates the conscience of the millions. Because of its presence the vicious are less vicious, and the well disposed are virtuous on a higher plane of motive and achievement. If hopeless atheism is driven back by the knowledge of God; if, in the rush of mad folly and rampant vice, men are unable to become utterly oblivious of Divine things and of the world to come; if again and again the powers of evil are driven from the gate,—it is due in great measure to the powerful influence of the word. Whether the sociology now forcing itself into the current thought of the age, and asserting itself more and more emphatically in the parliaments of the world and at every point of our civilization, is to be, not an abortion or a curse,

but a great blessing to every class; whether the result will be to enthrone the demon of selfishness or Christian philanthropy over public and private life,—will depend on its having the word of God for its aliment and directive force.

When that word attains its full sway, it will make all the difference between a nation building itself largely on the quicksands of a miserable utilitarianism and a nation founded on the truth and justice of God. The sacred book will not then be divorced from public affairs, or eschewed by leaders of public opinion, or deemed improper in the arguments of the secular press, or prostituted to the ends of fanaticism and hypocritical cant. Its teaching will give hue and tone to literature, be a stay and guide to our politics and legislation, will rule our public and private ethics, and everywhere receive the respect befitting a message from "the King eternal, immortal, invisible."

(8) The Bible in and for the *world*. Never was its intrinsic worth greater than it is to-day, thanks to the toilers who have laid bare its wealth of meaning. And never was its beneficent influence more wanted by the peoples of the earth. A multitude of nations in the regions of darkness and the shadow of death stand in urgent need of its light. For the millions made orphans by sin it brings news of a heavenly Father who invites them all back to His love. For every man sin-cursed and hopeless it bears the tidings that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief, and that "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." Not till the Church, like its Lord, has compassion on the multitude of the nations and carries

them the "good tidings of great joy," will it accomplish its benign mission, and look "forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." The Bible is a boon, not for any class or nation alone, not a monopoly of the clergyman or the student, but, far away above all other books, the book for the millions of the human race. Protestantism is bound by its essential principles never to rest until the Bible is within reach of every man throughout the world.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OFFICE OF REASON IN THE USE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

Our view would be incomplete if we omitted to consider the relation of reason to the Scriptures as a message from God.

By reason I intend that power of thinking, whether by intuition or ratiocination, by memory, perception, reflection, or imagination, that whole intellectual nature in man, which contributes so largely to his supremacy on earth and his similitude to the Creator; the power which penetrates the secrets of nature or soars through its awful vastnesses, weighing and measuring alike atoms and worlds, analysing the subtleties and complexities of mind, glancing through countless ages in the past, and balancing the probabilities of the future; the power which communes with kindred natures and contemplates the spiritual and the infinite. By this noble gift man is at once lord of the world and allied to heaven.

And yet the limitations and imperfections of this God-like nature are apparent. How much its fallibility and perversity may be due to the entrance of sin, which doubtless disturbed the balance of the mental faculties, it is impossible to say; but the reality of these imperfections is matter of daily experience. The bias of feeling or interest often perverts the judgment, or dims the in-

tellectual vision. The feebleness and faults of human reason continually betray themselves. Left to themselves, the keenest minds fail to find out God. Nay, sometimes ignorance of Divine things keeps pace with culture in others. And often the nearest approximations to Divine truth by the light of nature, lacking certainty, have not sufficed to oblige men to believe and to do. Nevertheless, amid all the signs of incompetency and degeneracy, enough remains of reason to make it, next to the moral nature, the noblest endowment of humanity.

1. With regard to our message from heaven, reason is its necessary *counterpart*. It may be estranged, or so warped by prejudice and sophistry as to seem a deadly enemy to the revelation; but reason in its best state is to the revelation as the lock to the key, or the eye to the light. Without the revelation reason gropes in vain for the truth; without the reason the revelation is incommunicable. In the revelation reason obtains the only solvent of its greatest problems. In reason the revelation finds the ear into which it can speak its message. But for reason the revelation would discourse its music to the deaf and cast its light on the blind. Revelation is the angel of truth descending into the embrace of reason.

If, in the name of reason, men have misrepresented revealed religion as if it were the negation of intelligence, so also in the name of religion men have anathematized reason as if it were the natural enemy of Christian faith; and thus have they conspired to put asunder what God had joined together.

2. Reason is the proper *recipient* of the Divine message. The receptivity of the one corresponds to the beneficent

fitness of the other, as the animal system is constituted to receive aliment from food.

Reason is not the *source* of the highest knowledge, but the receptacle. It is the power of thought; but as there are no innate ideas, the materials it works upon must come from without. To put a ban on reason in relation to religion is to close the only avenues by which religious truth can enter the soul. They who seek a religion as devoid as possible of reason, whether from indolence or misapprehension, do a grievous wrong to themselves as well as to religion, and are likely to get a counterfeit religion. In a healthy mind reason, by means of revelation, perceives, retains, accumulates Divine truth to assimilate it into the spiritual life, and thus promotes a robust holiness, having conscious communion with the infinite Intelligence.

The reception of revelation is the illumination and ennoblement of reason; not extinguishing, but purifying the light of nature, that so the lesser light may blend with the greater. In a sense, revealed religion "illumines what is in us."* But it also *imparts* knowledge which otherwise would not be in us: knowledge, not intuitive, but derived from above.

Nor can it be admitted that reason is incapable of so receiving knowledge of things supernatural. It is not imprisoned in any natural barriers through which concepts of things outside our little world cannot penetrate. Since they come to us, like other ideas, in the form of human thought couched in human language, the question, so far as it affects their communicability, is not, Are the ideas

* Martineau, *Seat of Authority*, p. 302.

natural or supernatural? but, Are they intelligible? Very different is the question of conveying supernatural knowledge from God to the original seers. For a seer to receive information which had never taken human form, —thoughts direct from the mind of God, as when Moses heard His voice at Horeb, or Isaiah received intimation of future events, or Mary was informed of the incarnation, —it would appear impossible for the communication to enter the recipient's mind without supernatural agency. Nature, as far as known to us, has no apparatus for such transmission. But when the ideas have been once translated into human concepts and symbols no further miracle is necessary for their passage from mind to mind. Our alleged incapability of receiving them, though they relate to things above nature, has no rational basis.

3. The office of reason is that of *critic* or verifying faculty, to examine and judge of the import and credentials of the Divine message. By it everything in religion, as in natural science and all human affairs, must be tried. It is our only faculty for the purpose. If we set up conventional rules of action, submit to custom and the force of habit, and rely on experience, they ought to be all amenable to the test of reason. There is no religion in the world which does not wittingly or unwittingly desire its approval. Even the Romanist holds it reasonable to surrender all to the authority of "the Church," and the extreme mystic and the esoteric Buddhist claim the sanction of reason for their initial step of ceasing to reason.

It is not for Protestant Christianity to repudiate its answerableness to fair intellectual examination, but rather to insist that, meeting all the just demands of criticism,

it has the best right to the assent of the intellect. Protestantism has cause to welcome the searching scrutiny of ingenuous criticism, as superstition has to avoid it. The credentials of Christianity are appeals to reason. In all religious controversy the aim of each side is to claim its support. And what is interpretation of Scripture but the endeavour of reason to separate the true wheat from the chaff of false induction, by discrimination, comparison, analysis, synthesis; by the tests of contradiction, intuition, analogy, scope, and purpose; by textual criticism, philology, and introduction; and by all processes of thought which may contribute to a determination of the meaning? "Reason is the foundation of all certitude." * It is not the authority to say what ought to have been revealed, or in what mode, but the power to ascertain what is revealed, and in what form.

Protestantism has no quarrel with rationalism as to the right of reason to examine the claims of Scripture as a message from God and to judge of its meaning. But it must insist upon the right use of reason, not allowing sophistry to pass, in its name, nor irrational arrogance to dictate to the Omniscient. The reasoning must be sound and fair.

Reason does not create, but finds out the truth and import of the message. It may mould the rule of faith and practice into various shapes more or less true to the original, but their authority is derived from the Scriptures. As the recipients of St. Paul's epistles would test their genuineness by his handwriting at the close, and by other criteria; as a banker guards against a fraudulent cheque by the signature, and by other indications,—so we employ our

* Richard Watson, *Institutes*, vol. i., p. 152 (edition of 1852).

reason, however informally, in examining the grounds on which Scripture is to be believed and obeyed. If sound reason *really* found therein self-contradictions, sanctions of immorality, or assertions of known impossibilities, the claim of Scripture would be invalidated, as now it is confirmed by the contrary result.

So far from avoiding the test, Christianity never tires of appealing to intellect and conscience. "By the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." "We persuade men." St. Paul, "as his custom was," "reasoned with them, . . . opening and alleging." The readers are invited to examine. "I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say." "Judge ye yourselves."

4. Yet reason, though in some sense a judge of, must be *subject to Scripture.* It is a judge loyal, but not sovereign, as Her Majesty's judges are not above, but bound to conform to the law, their function being to interpret and apply, not to make the law. A more exact way of stating this relation would be to say the functions of reason and Scripture are distinct, and neither must trench on the province of the other. The function of Scripture is to give the doctrine to be believed and the duty to be performed; the function of reason is to see and apply what is so given on due attestation. Scripture claims the right to teach because it is accompanied with proof of Divine authority; reason claims the right to examine and judge of that proof. But that demand being duly met by sufficient evidence, reason has no right to refuse the teaching; its remaining right and duty are to interpret the teaching justly. If reason presumed to be

the source of the doctrine contained in Scripture, or misconstrued it, or refused submission to it, that would be an unreasonable assumption of prerogative. Reason is subordinate to Scripture, not in the right to exercise itself on the subject, but in the right to deliver the doctrine. Thus rationalism, which presumes to forbid a miraculous revelation in Scripture, is an irrational attempt of the mind to break loose from its just limitations by usurping the office of revealer.*

Rationalism sets itself a task as hopeless as it is needless when it demands the exclusion of mystery from the Christian religion. Every truth in the human mind is associated more or less nearly with the unknown. From any starting-point of real knowledge it is not far to an unanswerable question. It may be the *nexus* of causation, the nature of force, or the mode of communication between brain and mind. It were unreasonable to suppose the same should not hold in the highest regions of truth; such as the incarnation, the trinity, and the secret energy of the Spirit. Reason revolts at self-contradiction and absurdity, not at mystery. For how can the finite sound the depths of the infinite? Rationalism is reason gone wild when it insists on having all knowledge or none. While the freedom of reason distinguishes it from the abject inertness to which superstition would enslave it, its becoming subjection to Scripture differentiates it from the wayward license which delights to call itself "free thinking."

* "It requires only a very slight consideration to show that the boasted prerogative of reason is still only that of a limited monarch; and that its attempts to make itself absolute can only end in its own dethronement." —H. Rogers, *Reason and Faith*, p. 8.

In the apprehension of truth, reason is greatly assisted by a healthy spiritual state. From a heart filled with "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," or exhilarated by adoring love, and in affinity with all that is holy, and, it may be, often upborne on the wings of joy in God, comes a powerful reaction on the intellectual faculties. The refracting and obscuring clouds arising from a faulty moral bias are dissipated. The mental vision becomes clearer, the insight keener, the outlook wider, the gauge truer, and the stream of Divine truth gains more copious inflow into a spirit with whose moral attitude and bent it is in full accord.

How easy for ignoble predilections to sway the process of examination! No doubt persecutors thought they were doing God service; and there can be as little doubt the error had some of its roots in the moral disposition. Othello was far from being the only one who ever allowed his feeling to blind his reason, though the interworkings between the two are often too subtle and intricate to be fully traced.

Our Lord's maxim, that "if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God," is based on the reciprocal relation between our moral and our intellectual states, as well as on Divine appointment. The efforts of the intellect are as certainly assisted by habitual purity of heart as they are hindered by moral depravity, and in nothing more than in questions of religion.

5. *Private judgment.* Such application of reason to the credentials and contents of Scripture is the right and obligation of the *individual.*

The one message for all commends itself to "*every man's*

conscience." "They shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me" (John vi. 45). "Moses and the prophets" were intended for the use of private persons, such as the members of the rich man's family (Luke xvi.). The epistles to the Churches and the catholic epistles were not addressed to a ruling body which should deal them out to the people in such measure and mixture as it deemed proper, but to the individual members; *e.g.* "To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." "To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. i. 2). "All the saints which are in Achaia" (2 Cor. i. 1; Eph. i. 1; Phil. i. 1; Col. i. 2; Heb. xiii. 7, addressed to the individual members of the Church). In connexion with His commands God enters into direct relations with the individual man. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him" (John xiv. 21). But how if the man be denied immediate access to His commandments? The right and duty of the individual to possess and use the law of the gospel is the requisite correlative of his responsibility to the righteous Judge. If "the prophecy of the Scripture" is the lamp to which all are required to "take heed," what authority on earth can have the right to deny it to any man? Christian brethren are instructed to "receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save their souls" (Jas. i. 21). They have therefore a right to it undiluted and uncorrupted.

Faith and obedience require a basis of special knowledge

such as the Bible alone imparts. Its teaching enables the probationer, threading his way through temptation, and moulding his destiny, to secure eternal life. To withhold it from him is to wrong both him and God. "To his own master he standeth or falleth." "For why is my liberty judged by another conscience?" (1 Cor. x. 29.) Nor can he innocently give it away or sell it for any price. It is his God-imposed law as well as his God-given boon. Denial of his right by pagan, Muhammadan, Roman Catholic, and Protestant authorities, and by members of the Greek Church, has resulted in the torture and murder of immense numbers through cruel persecution; while it is to be feared voluntary disuse of the right has been the ruin of a far greater number. It is no more a privilege than a duty to "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good," to "try the spirits, whether they be of God."

Rightly understood therefore, the proposition condemned and reprobated by the papal Syllabus of 1864 may be maintained; namely, that "every man guided by the light of reason is free to adopt and to recognise whatever religion he considers to be the true one." Is he to adopt what reason tells him is not true? It is part of the proper work of reason to ascertain and appropriate the authoritative teaching of Scripture; and even when, at the bidding of any hierarchy or civil power, a man dethrones his reason, he affects to have some reason for the deed.*

* It must be acknowledged that in religion, as in science, the many must be indebted to the testimony of the few. Many fundamental truths in science, *e.g.* the Newtonian theory of gravitation, conservation of force, impenetrability of matter, psychological laws, principles of mathematics,

The objection to the exercise of private judgment, that it makes each man's private judgment his rule of faith, and so sets up as many fallible rules as there are diversities of interpretation, is a transparent fallacy. It confounds the rule given to us with our use of it. The rule is the word of God in Scripture; our private judgment upon it is not the rule, but only our view of its grounds and import: as in civil affairs the standard of our duty is the law, not our individual interpretations of it. To a builder working by plans and specifications, they, and not his interpretation of them, are his rule, except in a lower and less proper sense. So to a Christian, the rule or standard of truth and duty is the Scriptures, and not his interpretation of them. The most conscientious interpreter may change and err; the rule itself does neither.

Estimated by its effects, the exercise of this liberty has not failed to enrich the Church. Assemblies and great officials have wielded vast influence by their historical decisions; but how much more is due to diligent study of the Scriptures by private individuals history tells, at least in part. If our day is distinguished by the results of biblical criticism to a degree never before attained, with a corresponding extension of scriptural knowledge, the

geological facts, circulation of the blood, shape and motions of the earth, are ascertained by a small number of men, and believed by many other scientists, and more or less by the multitude, who have no sufficient reason to doubt. In like manner, scholars and theologians examine the evidential grounds of the Christian faith, and great numbers profit by accepting the results; especially on finding them confirmed by their own experience, or by examining in a few cases for themselves. But in that there is no surrendering the right of private judgment. It is again a question of credible testimony, for the acceptance or rejection of which private judgment comes into play.

aberrations of many critics notwithstanding, it is mostly the outcome of the unfettered, assiduous study of innumerable individuals. Tracing the floods of spiritual revival to their origins, we come to many streamlets of private Bible study: the few Methodists at Oxford, Luther in his cell, Wickliffe searching the Scriptures, fearless of pope or king, and many besides who turned aside from the glare of histrionic worship to hear in secret communion with the word the still small voice of God, and then poured the blessed result on the thought of the Church at large.

It were as easy to show that ignorance of the book, through voluntary neglect or enforced prohibition, entails spiritual loss on the individual, as it would be to prove the profit of its conscientious perusal. A basis of intelligent acquaintance with the word gives to faith reality, robustness, and constancy; the paths of righteousness become plain, and the walk with God close and delightful; the babe in Christ thrives and grows to the fulness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus.

To the charge that the Protestant doctrine of private judgment is the cause of modern rationalism it is enough to reply: *first*, that before the rise of Protestantism the cancer of rationalism was already eating into the Church of Rome, not only among the schoolmen and laity, but among the priests and within the precincts of the pontifical palace, and is easily seen to be a reaction from the degenerate Christianity of the times. *Secondly*, better have the liability to abuse of reason than have it manacled and trampled down under priestly domination. *Thirdly*, the advantages of freedom in intellect and conscience have

far more than compensated for the disadvantages. And, *fourthly*, whatever the consequences, right and duty ought to have precedence of supposed expediency.

Not that we should undervalue the manifold helps rendered by the Church, the living ministry, and an ever-growing literature. A wise searcher of the Scriptures gladly avails himself of whatever may render his apprehensions of Divine truth more vivid, accurate, and effective. But all such helps must be supplementary to, not instead of the Scriptures—the servants, not the masters of the word.

The individual believer is not indifferent to that general consensus of doctrine which, after passing through many fiery controversies, remains as the tried and deliberate judgment of the Church at large. He has not liberty to believe whatever he pleases, but is under solemn obligation to believe the truth to the best of his ability. But to whom does he owe it? Not to the Church, but to the Head of the Church. Nevertheless it is part of that duty that he give due consideration to the teaching of the truly catholic Church.

Neither is our position inconsistent with the use of doctrinal systems and confessions. A well-defined statement of doctrine imposed on itself by any Church may prevent confusion and error and tend to a better understanding of Scripture,—provided it be held as of ecclesiastical and not Divine authority, and be subject to Scripture; also that it be not enforced, like criminal law, by pains and penalties. By these provisos ecclesiastical tyranny is prevented; but they do not warrant that estimate of personal liberty according to which a man might claim to

continue an authorized teacher of a religious community to whose accepted standards his teaching had become opposed. That is a matter on which the community as well as he may have both rights and obligations.

Thus, while reason is the recipient, it is also the *user* of Scripture. The materials of Scripture admit of many arrangements by which their relations to each other and to other branches of knowledge, as well as to our common life, are more clearly brought out. While preserving the Bible intact, reason increases its use by arranging its contents for purposes of devotion, practical morality, and theology. To forbid this is to forbid reason to do its natural work.

6. "*The Seat of Authority in Religion.*"

At this stage of our subject the recent work of Dr. Martineau demands our special attention.* A large portion of the book is an eloquent endeavour, in the strain of advanced rationalism, to resuscitate some oft-answered objections of the "higher criticism." Our present concern is with Dr. Martineau's treatment of the province of reason in relation to revelation. In his view, the seat of authority is not the Church or Christ or the Scriptures, but human reason, especially the intuitive, and still more particularly the intuitive knowledge of God.

(1) It may clear away some mist if at the outset we ask of *what religion* is reason said to be the authoritative seat? And finding it is not any miraculous religion, or that contained in the Scriptures, or taught by Christ and His apostles, but only such as might be aptly called entirely

* *The Seat of Authority in Religion.* By James Martineau, Hon. LL.D., etc. 1890.

natural, but for Dr. Martineau's insistence on calling it supernatural, the question to be examined is simplified. Since the religion intended is that which is learnt by intuition of God, there is no difficulty in admitting that the seat of *its* authority, so far as it has any, is in the reason or intuition of the human mind. But for aught which that implies, the seat of authority in the *Christian* or miraculous religion may be in quite a different quarter.

(2) In Dr. Martineau's platform a principal plank is the *exclusion of the miraculous.* The resurrection of the dead and other miracles of Scripture are disposed of in the style of the German rationalists; or if allowed to have been possible, they are not allowed to be capable of proof to us, or of attesting a revelation. As Dr. Martineau believes in a personal God, he cannot have the same reason as the pantheist and atheist for pronouncing miracle impossible.

But why should a miracle be unverifiable? Was not the resurrection of Christ an event which men's senses could perceive and their reason judge of, while they were guarded against fraud and delusion by the contexture of the circumstances? Having seen the events, and satisfied themselves by proof beyond possibility of doubt that Christ died and was alive again, were the eye-witnesses not capable of testifying of the fact to the world? And were not their fellow men to whom they spoke capable of yielding rational assent to the testimony, thus receiving a mastering conviction of the fact, and of the cause it was intended to attest?

It avails not to suggest that, if supernatural events

actually took place, it might be by the action of invisible powers inferior to God, or of hidden causes in nature. For the particulars of the fact being foretold, and the claims of the cause to be from God staked beforehand on the evidence which the fact would afford, imply that God was in the deed, and by it displayed His approval of the cause.

Human reason will not be warned off the reality and evidential force of miracles by the assertion that it cannot apply itself to the subject. That would prescribe limits to the powers of reason which nature has not set, and to which reason will not submit,—a species of rationalistic tyranny over reason closely akin to that which sacerdotalism attempts at the other extreme. From experience we know it is not forbidden ground, for it has often been traversed by process of reason, and the question tested by balance of probabilities, yielding intelligent conviction as the result. There is no incongruity between the premisses of a well attested resurrection from the dead and the certainty that a miracle took place, or between that certainty and the further conclusion that the event was proof of Divine approval. And if the first steps of historic evidence could thus be taken, equally could the later steps, by which the report of the miracle wins *our* credence. To say therefore the quality of truth is wanting in positive statements of the miracle, that no arch of appreciable relation spans the interval between the attestation and the thing attested, and that the facts "are amenable to no standard of probability," is verily a kind of advocacy not entitled to rank above bold assertion. Reason is a far greater and nobler power than this limitation would imply.

This however is not the place for discussing the possibility or credibility of miracle. The point to be again noted is that, as the religion of which Dr. Martineau speaks is non-miraculous and non-scriptural, to grant that *its* seat of authority is in the human mind does not touch the question of the seat of authority with regard to New Testament religion.

(3) The central idea of Dr. Martineau's religion is that the human mind knows God by intuition; not that the knowledge is reasoned out *on the basis* of intuition, as many reason it out from causality, but, independently of ratiocination and evidence, the mind immediately perceives God, in the same way as it does its own identity, the trustworthiness of its memory, or of other faculties. This he calls supernatural revelation; and he asserts that revelation is impossible by the medium of the senses, of external facts, or of testimony, except as such external evidences may supplement the necessary intuition; though at the same time he feels obliged to admit some "lateral" influence in the spread of religious knowledge from those in whom the moral intuitions are clear to those in whom they are dim and inchoate. In addition to the reply that such perception, if true, would have no right to the name of supernatural religion, it is to be observed that the predication of the perception itself is a mere assumption.

Exception must be taken to Dr. Martineau's ruling out the possibility of Divine revelation by external means, by the word of Christ and His apostles, and by objective events apart from or prior to intuition of the truth. Surely there can be nothing in an infinite Intelligence, or in His creation, to preclude His making communications

mediately by sovereign intervention, and through the instrumentality of men; nor is there anything in the constitution or environment of man to preclude the possibility of his receiving them by such means. Of course, if Dr. Martineau may assume that nothing can be revelation from God to man except by *immediate* manifestation or direct communication from the one to the consciousness of the other, his conclusion is inevitable, that a message for all men by means of a few prophets and apostles, or by any other *means*, could not be revelation. But it might still be a message from God, and, being duly accredited, might fully, and better than anything else, answer the end of a special communication from God to man. The question then, so far as it is only one of nomenclature, is reduced to insignificance. And if it is only whether "revelation" be an appropriate *name* for the process, it is difficult to see why that should not be called revelation which unveils or makes known to man the mind of God by means of both miraculous and natural procedure. It must be in the power of Omnipotence to communicate with man either directly or indirectly; nor is it a misnomer in either case to call it revelation.

Many theists deny intuitive perception of God, declaring they have no such experience; and they believe the knowledge of God is otherwise acquired. Now it is of the essence of intuition that the truth it perceives is self-evident and necessary, and therefore universal, so far as the meaning of the question is apprehended. It would be exceedingly strange if so many to whom the subject of theism is familiar were unconscious of their necessary judgments on it, even when they sought for and desired to

find them. This great lack of universality tells strongly against intuitive theism.

Again, the word God symbolises a very *complex* idea. That all His perfections are not intuitively seen is clear from the fact that so many men see only a few of them, and that often vaguely, perhaps not going beyond a crude notion of His power and intelligence. "With some never passing beyond dim yearnings and impersonal ideal images of something right and noble that draws them." *

Are some attributes intuitively perceived, and others not? Then *how much* in this "directest consciousness of God" is so seen? Dr. Martineau intimates that it is of Him in His "volitional and personal character"; it "carries in it the consciousness of a present Infinite and Eternal, behind and above as well as within all the changes of the finite world. It brings us into contact with a Will beyond the visible order of the universe, of a Law other than the experienced consecution of phenomena, of a Spirit transcending all spirits, yet communing with them in pleadings silently understood." † If all the ideas of God and His universe comprised in these words belong to the category of necessary beliefs or self-evident truths, the greater part of them must be lamentably dormant in most minds. If "neither Church nor Scripture can serve . . . as our rule of faith," it is manifest this much less effective medium of intuition will not serve any better.

It is a significant fact that, outside the light of Christianity, never any, even the greatest philosophers, approximated to so exalted a view of God and His relations to His creatures as Dr. Martineau supposes to be indigenous to the

* *Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 308. † *Ibid.*, p. 311.

human mind, at least potentially. In experience the results of such revelation are on the smallest scale. These considerations point to the conclusion that this alleged intuition of theism is an unconscious mistaking of other mental operations for self-evidence, and that the so called "seat of authority in religion" affords no anchorage for faith.

Possibly Dr. Martineau does not mean that all the ideas expressed by the word God—enough for the basis of a theological system—are immediately perceived, even by the few whose moral intuitions are the most developed. He may mean that some of the ideas supervene by logical inference from what is intuitive. But if so, we are thrown back into uncertainty as to what may be intuitively known of God.

The essence of supernatural revelation being intuitive consciousness, that is to say, the consciousness being constituted revelation by its intuitive character, it follows that all *other* intuition of truth must also be supernatural revelation for the same reason. Dr. Martineau admits that by the very same immediate Divine energy we intuitively believe "in space and time, the bases of geometry and number, in substance and causality";* and he anticipates the objection that, on his view, these basal truths of natural science are supernaturally revealed. His mode of meeting the objection is altogether inadequate. Admitting that the process is essentially the same in these intuitions as in religion, he distinguishes them by difference of names, calling the latter supernatural, and the former metaphysical; and also by difference in the

* *Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 306.

classes of truth to which they respectively relate, the latter to moral or religious ideas, the former to those which belong to the natural and necessary order of things. But obviously the question of name is beside the mark, and so is the classification of subjects or objects. The question here is not *what* class of truths are known, but *how* are they known. The point in dispute is not the object or truth seen, but how the mind first sees it. Nor is the essence of the revelation altered by saying it is moral in the one case and intellectual or natural in the other; for still, in both cases, the communication is immediately from God, in both the perception is intuitive, direct, necessary, and the ideas or truths are self-evident.

As laid down by Dr. Martineau, the moral intuitions are immediate revelations from God. The mind perceives the truth directly without ratiocination or other means. No matter what the class of truth or the subject to which it relates, being intuitive, the consciousness of it is necessary, and independent of evidence, and in all human minds the same, more or less, according to power and development. But seeing that which makes the moral intuitions supernatural revelation is not the moral subjects to which they relate, but the intuitive character of the knowledge, the same character must make all other intuitive knowledge supernatural revelation; for example, causality and personal identity. In spite of Dr. Martineau's explanations, the logical consequence of his position with regard to moral intuitions is, that natural science equally with religion is a matter of supernatural revelation. But as names do not alter the nature of things, it would be quite as reasonable to say that as all other intuitions

are *natural*, so are the moral intuitions as far as they are real. At any rate the latter can only be designated supernatural religion in a far-fetched and non-natural sense.

Dr. Martineau thinks we interpose an infallible book between the soul and God, as the Roman community interposes an infallible Church; thus hiding God from the soul. It would be much truer to say that because the soul of itself cannot see God, He, not we, grants a book, by the light of which He becomes visible to the minds of men. It is the gift, not the obstruction of light. The "infallible Church" interposes itself between God's book and the souls of the people; the ministry which ought to hold the telescope in order that through it men might see God, obtrudes itself between them and the lens.

But even if men could intuitively know all that is claimed by Dr. Martineau concerning God, it would fall far short of their needs. All the theism said to be thus attainable fails to explain our sin, or to show a way of deliverance. It does not satisfactorily lift the veil of the dread world to come, or afford adequate motive-power to holiness and virtue. Moreover, if we admitted some intuitive knowledge of God, that would imply no impossibility of further disclosures by objective means.

While laying an intolerable burden on intuition Dr. Martineau degrades the "practical reason" by denying its competency to examine, and on adequate evidence to embrace with immense advantage a special revelation from God by supernatural and external means. He regards much in the Bible and in the teaching of Christ as circumstantial and imaginary accompaniments to the pith of intuitional truth: visions, voices, predictions, descriptions, not in-

herently true, but encrusted on the core of intuitional revelation, which points us to "what really *is* or *ought to be*, not to what *has happened, is happening*, or *will happen*"; a distinction which, besides other things, gratuitously proscribes that knowledge of Christ's humiliation and God's redeeming work, of man's moral history and future state, which occupies so large a place in the Scriptures, and is of paramount importance to all men. The surroundings which the eloquent doctor takes to be untrue and incapable of being the medium of revelation, by an artificial and arbitrary distinction he calls "apocalyptic." But why may not an event or a scene be true as fact, and ascertained to be so by our reason? If God could determine to redeem a sinful race by sending His Son; if He could appoint future retribution, and send forth His Spirit to be the gracious agent in men's hearts, in order that His religion might everywhere prevail,—it was surely in His power to make these things known to us men by means of prophets and apostles. To limit Him as Revealer to the channel of intuition and to a few elementary truths of religion has no warrant on the side of either God or man. It stands condemned by what has been actually done. It is easy to assert that the incarnation is a kind of fact which "transcends all evidence"; but it *has* been evidenced to the admiring satisfaction of millions, who on that evidence grasped the truth of it with intelligent faith.

Again, Dr. Martineau depreciates ratiocinative or "practical reason," when he makes it out to be so feeble because it relies on probable evidence, and especially testimony. He himself relies greatly on historic testimony in his

attacks on the historic proof of Christianity; yet he has no confidence in history when it bears manifold witness to the authenticity and Divine origin of Scripture. He must be well aware of the fact accentuated by Bishop Butler, that, in all moral subjects, probability is the proper kind of evidence, of which testimony is a leading branch. Indeed, with regard to the Divine origin of Christianity and its record, the real question is not whether probable evidence is congruous, but whether there be enough of it to warrant our belief and action. Miracles, it is true, may be God's "immediate act" "on the world and not on us"; but the immediate effect, according to the degree of probable evidence, is on us; and that is the effect needed for our conviction, and intended by the Divine agent. The act which raised Christ from the dead was not immediately on us, but its real effect on us is that it, being credibly testified, assures us of the person and mission of Christ, and the accomplishment of our redemption.

Dr. Martineau's representation of the dependence of historical Christianity on the religion of nature is inadmissible. Since the Christian apologist argues for revealed religion from the inadequacy of natural religion as shown by reason, it is said he carries over into the revealed all the weakness of the natural, and so, building the revealed on the natural, the latter depends on the former, which is confessedly inadequate. It might be replied, that some apologists dispense with the presumptive argument from man's need, and proceed directly to prove by probable evidence that the Bible is true and its religion Divine. But the fallacy of the objection lies in the assumption that the weakness of natural theology is carried over

into the revealed, as if no further proof were adduced. Nature may enlighten us to the extent of a very limited theism; but it is because that does not suffice that we seek additional light on Divine things and find it in the Scriptures, which bring their *own* credentials over and above the contents of natural theism. What is weak and untenable in natural theology we leave behind, what is strong we carry forward into Christianity to be further strengthened and confirmed; but we build our confidence in the latter on its own proper proof. We take whatever natural theology can give; but our belief in the fact of miracle and our use of Bible miracles, supported by their antecedent probability in the service of revelation, rest not on what we take over from natural theism, but on abundant historic testimony, and the stupendous effects which nothing less than miracle can account for.*

We have thus no alternative to regarding this brilliant exposition of "the seat of authority in religion" as another abortive attempt to get rid of supernatural revelation. As there is no position logically tenable between accepting Jesus Christ as God and rejecting Him as a deceiver or deceived, seeing He declares Himself God, so for the same reason there is no consistent position between taking the

* Dr. Martineau's contention, that we cannot proceed to reason from nature to nature's God until revelation (intuitive) has assured us of the reality of God, calls for two remarks. First, that His natural works are sufficient to suggest "His everlasting power and divinity" (Rom. i. 20); secondly, that if the argument of natural theology could not proceed without the idea of God previously conceived, it is not necessary to have previous *certainty* of it. Enough that it is any way present to the mind. And it has always been present among men through past ages, whether it be due to nature or tradition, or both. The necessity therefore of intuitive certainty before we can take a step in natural theology is an error.

Scriptures for a Divine message and repudiating them for an imposture. If they be not Divine, their "thus saith the Lord" is a false claim and disentitles them to the approval of reason; but if the claim be true, reason's full consent to their authenticity falls far short of their due. They are entitled to be treated as a message from heaven.

However it may be in a non-miraculous religion, it is clear the ruling authority in the Christian religion cannot be less than Divine. But as human reason, whether intuitive or ratiocinative, is merely natural, and as we cannot accept the *ipse dixit* of any Church as Divine, we fall back for that authority on the Scriptures, the only authentic and inspired record of God's special self-manifestations to mankind. All honour to that marvellous gift of reason, by which man apprehends and appropriates the natural and supernatural revelations of his Maker and guards himself against the counterfeits of delusion and imposture. But with all its noble powers, it can never be a substitute for the clear, authoritative guidance of His written word.

CHAPTER IX.

THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE USE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

In the foregoing treatment of reason there has been a latent presupposition of the Holy Spirit's active presence in all men, by which the mind, otherwise unable to rise above its moral darkness, is enabled to receive and apply the word. It is needful at this stage to give a distinct, though very brief consideration to the Spirit's part in rendering revelation efficient for its purpose. When our Lord on the eve of departure promised to be still with His disciples on earth in the person and work of the Paraclete as His successor, representative, and executor, He could not intend to except the Spirit's gracious help to His people in receiving and using the one great record of the mediatorial economy.

This function of the Spirit is the more easily overlooked inasmuch as no dividing line is visible between the natural operations of our own mental powers and the agency of the Spirit within us. In his most religious moods the Christian is not conscious of two minds, his own and the Spirit's, energising side by side. It is a synergism in which the activities of the two are so intimately joined that the human spirit may mistake them both for his own action only. But by other means he learns that, in dealing with the inspired book, his natural faculties are influenced by the secret agency of the Paraclete.

By Him our evil prejudice is neutralized or done away, our weakness strengthened, our darkness dispelled, our mental vision cleared, our moral attitude rectified, and the mind empowered to grasp the all-important truth. The message speaks of another world and of grander realities than belong to the present, while the Spirit endows us with perspicacity to understand and power to profit by them.

Notwithstanding the ceasing of those many miraculous gifts of the Spirit which were bestowed for the founding of Christianity, other gifts of the Spirit are continued.

1. *Enlightenment.* By His illumination we acquire that "spiritual-mindedness" which discerns what others see not. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This is that "wisdom and spiritual understanding" by which "we are filled with the knowledge of His will"; that "unction from the Holy One" by which believers "know all things" necessary to their salvation, and are guarded against the seductions of false doctrine. "The anointing which ye received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as His anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in Him." To "apprehend with all the saints" the love of Christ, requires the qualification of being "rooted and grounded in love"; and that is the result of being "strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward

man."* Thus the Spirit of truth raises the soul to that becoming moral attitude towards the truth which is necessary to its right apprehension. As moral perversity distorts perception of Divine things, moral goodness wrought by the Spirit enables us to see God.

Not that He makes us omniscient, for the reference is limited to a particular subject, recognition of the true Christ despite antichristian teaching; nor infallible, for Scripture and experience prove we are not. The "unction from the Holy One" may assist us through the perils of false doctrine to that scriptural knowledge "which is able to save our souls"; but it does not guarantee us against all misunderstanding, even in the subjects it is intended to illuminate. It may help us to satisfy ourselves that certain books were of Divine origin, and designed to be our supreme guide in matters of faith and action, and that they teach certain doctrines; but our conclusions are not infallibly true, seeing that men equally conscientious and competent arrive at different results on many particulars, though in the main they be of the same mind.

2. *Sanctification.* It is the office of the Spirit to sanctify the moral character "through sanctification of the Spirit." But His instrument for that end is the word of truth. "Sanctify them in the truth: Thy word is truth." He sanctifies by manifestation of the truth. It is "by the washing of water (the symbolic description of the Spirit's work) with the word." "Ye have purified your souls in obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren." If the gospel comes "in power," it is because it comes "in

* John xiv.; 1 Cor. ii. 12–14; Col. i. 9; 1 John ii. 20–27; Eph. iii. 16–18.

the Holy Ghost." The Thessalonians "received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost."

Here is the scriptural doctrine of "the letter" and "the spirit," in contradistinction to that which supposes the Spirit to have superseded and done away with the authority of the Scripture. The true meaning is that the letter is illumined by the Spirit, and endowed with His power to become "the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe." Without gracious power in the heart, the letter set up as the only deliverer, producing only the sense of the bitter consequences of alienation from God, "killeth"; but the Spirit, by the instrumentality of the letter, wounds and heals, kills and makes alive, generates the sense of bondage and then of adoption, which cries, "Abba, Father." *

Analogy.—The Spirit's agency in this respect is analogous to His wide and varied action in all departments of creation. He who brooded over chaos and transformed it into cosmos, who garnished the heavens and gave life to the animal kingdom, who descended on Jesus, and energises in all men to deliver from sin and gladden with the beauty of holiness, would not perfect His great work as the agent of the risen Lord if He did not also enable the teachable soul to receive and profit by the word.

3. *Persuasion.* This work corresponds with the moral freedom of men; for in its higher stages it is not coercive, but tractive, "giving more grace" as it is welcomed, and withdrawing as it is persistently repelled. Hence the understanding of the word may be darkened by "grieving,"

* 2 Thess. ii. 13; John xvii. 17; Eph. v. 26; 2 Cor. iii. 6; 1 Pet. i. 22; 1 Thess. i. 5, ii. 13.

"resisting," or "quenching" the Spirit. And yet it is a gift open to all, and to be obtained especially by supplication. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke xi. 13.)

Such help is the fitting complement to the Spirit's work as inspirer. First, He controls the assumption of human language by the message; and then He gives it gracious effect in the readers, not making them infallible interpreters, but assisting their understanding and acceptance of the word.

4. *Given to collective bodies of believers.* This grace of the Spirit is also granted to the Churches and collective bodies of Christians. He who descended on the one hundred and twenty in the upper room may be expected in any other assembly of believers met to promote the work and kingdom of Christ. To this branch of the Spirit's work belongs the calling and qualifying of the living ministry, and the grace vouchsafed to them and other officers, and to members of the Church of Christ, in all their assemblies for ascertaining and promulgating the word of the Lord.

5. *Abuses.* But, like other doctrines, that of the Spirit's illumination has not escaped abuse.

(1) *By the Church.* It is reasonable to think that, as Christ is present by His Spirit to bless even two or three assembled in His name, He will not refuse the same grace to the representatives of any large number of His Church gathered together for counsel on questions of Divine truth. On all such assemblies we may well pray confidently for the descent of the hallowing and enlightening Spirit.

But here again ambitious and extravagant men have claimed for councils a perfection of knowledge and an authority to decide under the guidance of the Spirit for which there was no justification either in Scripture or in the practical results. The love of dominion over other men's beliefs and consciences, and over the affairs of men, has dared to veil its blasphemous usurpations under the pretence of being led of the Spirit. False and arrogant decrees have been issued in the name of the Holy Ghost. The result has been, that as the advancement of Scripture knowledge and of general intelligence has thrown a fuller light on the questions, these gross affronts to the truth and shameful trickeries have been exposed, but not before they had done much harm to the cause of truth and love.

Nothing of this kind has been more scandalous than the habit of the papal Church to attribute its dogmas, decrees, and government to the Holy Spirit. The promise of the Spirit (Matt. xvi. and xviii.; John xiv., xv., and xvi.) as the agent of supernatural communications of doctrine had its fulfilment in the work of apostolic men, to whom alone that exceptional gift of the Spirit was vouchsafed, and who by it completed the Divine Scriptures. The wisdom of the discontinuance is seen in the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and is confirmed by the fact that since the apostolic age no additions have been made which were worthy of the supernatural.

(2) *By individuals.* Nor have abuses of the doctrine of the Spirit been wanting in numberless individuals. The fresh revelations of the ancient Montanists, the morbid utterances of the more extreme mystics, and the claim

of too many persons to be the organs of direct revelations from the Spirit as by a kind of private oracle, not to mention the frightful excesses of the Anabaptists under alleged impulses of the Holy Ghost, are sad examples of the extent to which men presume to father on the Holy One the responsibility of their own vagaries and misdeeds.

6. *Criterion.* Against the danger of such abuses there is the safeguard of Scripture. Anything contrary to that is clearly untrue and to be rejected; and any revelation additional to the complete rule of faith lies open to grave suspicion of ignorant presumption or fraud. Whether different from or additional to the Scriptures, if unattested, it can have no title to our credence. Further, nothing can be a communication from the Spirit of truth which is not in conformity with His perfect character and with the expression of His mind in Scripture, for He cannot contradict Himself. Therefore to attribute to His agency what is unworthy of Him is akin to the blasphemy which ascribed the miracles of our Lord to Beelzebub. And to set forth any doctrine or action as authorized by Him which conflicts with the word on which he impressed His sanction is an attempt to fix on Him the wrong-doing of man.*

* Hooker pointed out the confusion likely to ensue were each man to be believed who professed to have a revelation from the Spirit, seeing how diverse such revelations are, and how wanting in credentials. "Where such singularity is, they whose hearts it possesseth ought to suspect it the more, inasmuch as if it did come from God, and should for that cause prevail with others, the same God which revealeth it to them would also give them power of confirming it unto others, either with miraculous operation, or with strong and invincible remonstrance of sound reason: . . . whereas now the error and insufficiency of their arguments do make it on the contrary side against them—a strong presumption that God hath not moved their hearts to think such things as He hath not enabled them to prove."—*Works*, vol. ii., p. 41.

Consequently, in all professions of the Spirit's teaching, ordinary or extraordinary, by individuals or collective bodies, let nothing be countenanced which does not agree with the character of the blessed Spirit and the doctrine of His message. But we must not on that account undervalue the Spirit's gracious energy, which is free for all who humbly aspire to know God. The book without the Spirit lacks the effective force; the Spirit working through the book is the power of God unto salvation.

CHAPTER X.

THE OFFICE OF THE CHURCH IN THE USE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

In the scheme of redemption the manifold elements, Divine and human, have their several parts to play, with a mutual adaptation not exceeded in the order of nature. An interesting phase of that spiritual order appears in the relations subsisting between the Scriptures and the Church. The Scriptures are necessary to the Church for its instruction and guidance, for its spiritual life and work, and as its weapon wherewith to conquer the world.

By the Church I mean no one Christian denomination or organized body of Christian professors, but the catholic Church of Christ's people sincerely professing His name on earth—it may be in many lands, under many names and forms of government, with diversities of gifts, views, and modes of action, but all holding to Jesus Christ as the one Head with whom they are in vital union. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph. iv. 4–6). "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body; . . . and were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 13).

1. *Custodian and Protector.* The charge which devolved on the Jewish community to guard and cherish the testimony in the holy of holies, and the whole law within the

Church and nation, devolves on the followers of Christ in this dispensation of the Spirit, with regard to the entire body of holy Scripture. For in it is contained the gospel which is to illumine the Church and save mankind. If through the ages the precious deposit was not to be lost or counterfeited, if through all seasons of gross neglect and of fierce opposition it was to remain intact and pure, it would seem that, besides a general providence, there should be some special body of persons responsible for its preservation; and who so likely as the Church, to whose affectionate care it was entrusted at the outset?

That it was of supreme importance to preserve the doctrine of Christ as enshrined in the Scriptures is manifest from its necessary connexion with the continuance and progress of Christianity, and from the earnest directions of its authors to that end. The disciples are required to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). "Striving for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. i. 27). And as the ministers of the Church have naturally a higher degree of the responsibility, St. Paul charges Timothy to hold to the faith (1 Tim. i. 18), to keep that which was committed to his trust (1 Tim. vi. 20), to "hold the pattern of sound words" (2 Tim. i. 13), and to "commit to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also," the things he had heard from the apostle by many witnesses (2 Tim. ii. 2). But the doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, which made men wise unto salvation, was finally embodied for the Church in the theopneustic Scripture (2 Tim. iii. 15–17), and in that form the saving doctrine has been preserved.

The Church of the living God is the house of God, and

"the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15), not its dictator; for in that respect it is subject to the truth, and bound to adhere to the doctrine which God has revealed. A curse rests on such as preach any other gospel than that which the apostles preached. In that sense the Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. ii. 20). And when St. Peter, by revelation from the Father, uttered the fundamental truth of our Lord's Divine Messiahship, Christ immediately declared on that He would build His Church (Matt. xvi. 18).

Such was the chronological order. The preaching of the doctrine now contained in Scripture preceded the Church, and was in great part the means of its formation. The apostles did not first organize a Church and then impart the message, but first preached the gospel and as men believed formed them into Churches to be fed and nourished by the same doctrine.

But the Church is the "pillar and ground of the truth" as having been the first to receive it from above through apostles and prophets. It thus became the property of the Church, not to be alienated, defiled, or lost, but jealously guarded, defended, and handed down through all succeeding time. St. Paul, who was "set for the defence of the gospel" (Phil. i. 17), closely associates the members of the Church with himself, "inasmuch as, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers with me of grace" (Phil. i. 7).*

* "The pillar and ground of the truth," "in that it is the element in which, and the medium by which, the truth is conserved and upheld." —Alford, after Theodoret and Calvin.

If some Churches have neglected this duty deplorably, and allowed the truth as treasured in the Scriptures to be obscured by other doctrine, or have failed to vindicate the authority and teaching of the word, others have been faithful and have done much to guard and maintain both.

2. *Teacher.* The Church is also the organ for the teaching of the truth in Scripture in order to conviction and edification. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. x. 17).

The Christian ministry was instituted, not to accomplish its end by whatever means it pleased, but especially by making known the good tidings. It is enjoined to make disciples of all nations by preaching the gospel to every creature. As under the Mosaic system the priests were to teach the people, and parents their children, the law of God, so in the new economy ministers are required to "preach the word" (2 Tim. iv. 2), to expound, illustrate, reason, persuade, exhort; but the staple of all must be "the word." The chief work of the apostles was "prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts vi. 4); and others were set apart to "labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. v. 17); and "they that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word" (Acts viii. 4); accordingly a bishop must be "apt to teach," and must keep to "wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness" (1 Tim. iii. 2; 2 Tim. ii. 24); "holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers" (Tit. i. 9, i. 3); "handling aright the word of truth" (2 Tim. ii. 15). Whether it be an eloquent

Apollos, mighty in the Scriptures, speaking officially, or private Christians seeking mutual edification, "if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God: . . . that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. iv. 11). The Bible in the Church is the candle of the Lord shining in the household of faith.

3. *To spread the truth.* It is the privilege and duty of the Church to publish Scripture truth for the enlightenment and salvation of all mankind, and that necessitates the wide circulation of the Bible itself. If the earth is to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, of which Scripture is the depository, and if for lack of it men die in darkness, the motives of obligation to God and compassion for the perishing urge all who bear the Christian name to join in making the Bible the handbook of every man. It was plainly God's plan to deposit the secret of salvation in the book, that it might spread from one to another till to all was revealed "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

4. *Anglican extreme.* The office of the Church towards the Bible is exaggerated and the relative value of the word lowered by those Anglicans who say that the Bible is based on the Church, and not the Church on the Bible. Instead of the Reformation principle that the credentials of any Church consist in its conformity with Scripture, it is held that the authority of Scripture depends on that of the Church. The people are not to exercise their private judgment in ascertaining the truth and divinity of the Scriptures by whatever evidences may be available, but must accept them as a message from heaven on the declaration of the Church. This inverted order is apparent

in the recent manifesto of thirty-eight clergymen, including several dignitaries and some "evangelicals," against the tendency of the "higher criticism."* This document declares it is not true "that the tribunal of human reason . . . has jurisdiction and competency to deliver judgment on the authority of the holy Bible." Again: "We believe the holy Scriptures to have this Divine authority, on the testimony of the universal Church, the spouse and body of Christ, the witness and keeper of Holy Writ. So that no opinion of the fact or form of Divine revelation, grounded on literary criticism of the Scriptures themselves, can be admitted to interfere with the traditionary testimony of the Church when that has been once ascertained and verified by appeal to antiquity." Reverent research by "the highest powers of the human intellect" may be employed on the subject, "provided that the object be the meaning of the living oracles, and not their genuineness or their authenticity." But as to the questions raised, "the synods of the Church have not yet spoken with authority to guide us in matters of such grave importance." We are to believe the Bible on the authority of the Church. This kind of lordship over our faith is not in the Thirty-nine Articles.

Logically and chronologically the Church was founded on the authoritative teaching of Christ and His apostles, the essence of which was the Divine Sonship and true messiahship of Jesus Christ, on which He affirmed He would build His Church (Matt. xvi. 17, 18). Accordingly, as "the household of faith," it is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself

* See *The Times* newspaper, December 18, 1891.

being the chief corner stone" (Eph. ii. 20). In the extension of the Church from its Judæan centre, the preaching of the word preceded and laid the foundation of new Churches. Very soon the same doctrine took permanent form in the New Testament for the use of the Church. To search the Old Testament Scriptures and compare them with the apostolic teaching was to prepare the way for new Churches (Acts xvii. 11). The epistles of the apostles afforded the Churches solid ground of continuance. "And so were the Churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts xvi. 5). The prophets and apostles, not the Church, provided the oral and then the written source and standard of doctrine on which the Church has always rested.

When we are told to trust the Bible on the sole authority of the Church, we naturally ask, What is meant by "the Church"? For we notice strange confusion of the "universal" with a national or local Church, and of the invisible with the visible. It is said to be "the universal Church, the spouse and body of Christ." But that Church, as such, never did, and never could, meet on earth. Part of it—the triumphant—is in the invisible world; and the militant part is spread over many lands, and through many religious denominations on earth. The Omniscient alone has exact knowledge of its members. They are not confined to any ecclesiastical organization. They can neither meet in one vast assembly nor in "synod" by their representatives. "The Church, which is His body" (Eph. i. 22, 23), cannot, as such, decree anything collectively or officially about the Bible.

At other times the advocates of the view under con-

sideration seem to mean the "visible" Church of those who profess and call themselves Christians, or those who, on other terms, are joined under the same organization and recognised as "the congregation of Christ's flock." Indeed, since the time of Augustine many have recognised no invisible Church as distinct from the visible. They think of a definite ecclesiastical society, or a confederation of such societies.

But if that be the sort of body on which we depend for the Bible, which of the many societies answering to the description is the one holding authority to determine our Bible for us? Is it the Anglican, the Roman, the Greek, the Lutheran, the Reformed, or any one or all of the nonconformist Churches? or is it all these bodies together? If all, then those who alone are empowered to decide the great question are hopelessly at variance upon it among themselves. If "the Church" means those of them only who lay claim to lineal descent, by episcopal ordinations, from the apostles,—Anglican, Roman, Greek, —then these sections deny to each other the title of "the Church." Which are we to believe? At the same time the claims of each depend on a chain of "apostolic succession" which history does not verify, which some of the most learned and judicious of the Anglican clergy have felt compelled to renounce, which has no support in Scripture, which, if true, would unchurch and anathematize more Christian men and women than all the population of the United Kingdom, and which is to-day the greatest barrier to the union of Christians.

If we must take our Bible on the word of a Church's officials, let it be a ministry evincing by its fruits that it has the mind, preaches the doctrine, and fulfils the mission

of Christ, rather than one clinging for existence to a chain of official acts, some links of which are wanting in history and others corroded by the acid of unchristian procedure—a chain which the absence of any one valid link must render worthless. If the whole credit of the Bible rests on a Church, let it be one owning no headship but Christ's, and whose validity is not dependent on an "historic episcopate" which cannot be proved; let it be one which bears the sanction of Christ in its holy living, its pure doctrine, its brotherly fellowship, its faithful discipline, and its blessed results.

Moreover, as between the modern Church and that of antiquity, to which belongs the exclusive power over our faith in the Scriptures? If to the latter, how, when, or where did it ever decide the matter? In the second and few following centuries the authority of Scripture was assumed and appealed to, not formally determined, by the Church. It is not determined in the three creeds. The Church in those times never as a whole, or by its councils, attempted to determine the matter. Its writers, who did not however speak in the name of the Church, did not determine it. Nor were they competent to do so. Some of their writings were marred by fabrications, follies, or absurdities, as may be seen in the New Testament Apocrypha; and the works of the greater authors were in many places unscriptural, and encumbered with errant allegorical interpretation. Errors of doctrine soon began to show themselves on the sacraments, episcopacy, angelology, celibacy, asceticism, inspiration, and other subjects, proving the truth of Neander's remark, that there was a great drop in the character of Christian literature immediately after the

apostles passed away. On Christian theology there never was, even in the early Church, such a consensus as would fulfil the *quod semper* rule of Vincentius: a theology believed by all, everywhere, and always. "The unanimous consent of the Fathers" is very dubious. This shows how far the Church of "antiquity" was from being "undivided" in doctrine; to say nothing of conflicts about Easter, of hierarchical rivalries, and other Church questions, or of the heresies which swarmed from that Church, though some of the so called heretics may have been as true members of the universal Church as those who excommunicated them from the larger body.

Again, if antiquity settled the question of the Bible, what did it leave in that matter for the modern Church to do but carry out the ancient decision? At most the modern Church could only reaffirm the conclusions of antiquity on such evidence as might be adduced, which denudes the present-day Church of the authority often claimed for it. But even then it is no easy task for the modern Church to ascertain the decisions of the early Church with accuracy and completeness. Consequently this theory involves us in the difficulty of having to find out and trust in the mind of the Church of sixteen or seventeen centuries ago. Little relief could that effort bring from wearisome, futile research and distressing uncertainty.

But who gave the ancient Church any such office or power as this theory ascribes to it? The apostles were promised the "keys" of Christian doctrine in order that they might complete the gospel message. No promise to that effect was made to men of subsequent times. Christ engaged to be present with His ministers and people "alway,

even to the end of the world"; but this promise implied no peculiar gift to Church and clergy of the patristic age.

If, on the other hand, it be held that the modern Church —say the Anglican—retains undiminished authority to dictate to us what the Bible is: let us suppose Parliament restored the powers of Convocation, and it met to decide for us respecting the authenticity and Divine origin of the Bible, what chance would there be of a united judgment in an assembly of "High," "Low," "Broad," and nondescript Churchmen?

And if that difficulty were surmounted, whose judgment would it be so long as not a single layman out of the millions belonging to the Anglican community was allowed to enter the assembly, and of the clergy only the few could be present who were entitled *ex officio* or by the votes of their fellow clergymen? Still less would any of the other great Christian communities of this and other lands have the slightest representation there, directly or indirectly. With what truth, or even decency, could the decision be called the authoritative decision of "the Church of Christ" or of "the universal Church"? And what influence would it be entitled to command? But as matters stand, not even that feeble determination is possible to "the Church."

When therefore I am required to receive the Bible as true and Divine because "the Church" tells me so, I answer: No; the witness of the Church or its writers is welcome to me as far as it is credible respecting the foundation facts of Christianity; but, of itself, it is far from enough for my faith's firm basis. I will not be denied the privilege of combining it with the evidence of other history, of the purity, unity, self-consistency, and marvel-

lous moral and spiritual influence of the Bible itself, confirmed by the supernatural change it has wrought on me as well as on millions besides. The Bible is all this to me in spite of much in "the Church" which has an opposite tendency. I am consequently prepared to test the claims of every Church by the principles of the Bible, and constrained to regard the notion that the Bible is based on the Church and not the Church on the Bible as having in it the seed of that mediæval system which, by attempting to dominate Christian faith, stifled it.

5. *The Church fallible.* In all its high functions the Church is fallible, as is made manifest by the palpable imperfections of the human mind, by the experience of the Church in the past, in which so much false doctrine has sprung up, by the innumerable diversities of professedly Christian teaching in different sections of the Church, and in each section. Being fallible in all its individual members, the Church is necessarily so in all its branches and in its totality.

6. *Claims of Rome.* This brings us face to face with the claims set up by the Church of Rome, that the rule of faith and practice is the Vulgate Old and New Testament Scriptures, the Apocrypha, and tradition as they are taught, with any new development of dogma, by the Church, which is rendered infallible for the purpose by the Holy Spirit, that Church being *itself* only. All these guides are held to be covered by the phrase "the word of God," to reject which is to be accursed.*

* "3. I also admit the sacred Scriptures, according to the sense which the holy mother Church has held, and does hold, to whom it belongs to judge of the sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures; nor will I ever

The awkwardness of setting up the translation of Jerome above the Hebrew and Greek originals, and the indefensible canonicity ascribed to the Apocrypha, are questions outside our present inquiry. Our immediate question is the alleged infallibility of the Roman Church, to which the canonicity and doctrine of Scripture are made subject. It is not to be wondered at that a Church should have the temerity to put forward so enormous a claim, since it is audacious enough to speak of its own as "the Catholic faith, which contains within itself, and claims as its own, all truth that is elsewhere to be found, and more than all, and nothing but truth." "To her is committed the care and the interpretation of revelation. The word of the Church is the word of the revelation. That the Church is the infallible oracle of truth is the fundamental dogma of the Catholic religion." *

On this view the Scriptures, though said to be infallible, cannot be the supreme rule of faith and practice, inasmuch as we are not permitted to take our doctrine and duty direct from them, but only from the Church's interpretation of them. The appeal lies, not from the Church to the Scripture, but from the Scripture to the Church; that is, if we are allowed to consult the Scripture at all. The Church is supreme over the Scripture. But as the Scrip-

take or interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers." But there is no such unanimous consent.

"14. I also profess and undoubtedly receive all other things delivered, defined, and declared by the sacred canons and general councils, and particularly by the holy Council of Trent; and likewise I also condemn, reject, and anathematize all things contrary thereto, and all heresies whatsoever, condemned, rejected, and anathematized by the Church.

"15. This true Catholic faith, out of which none can be saved."—From the *Creed of Pope Pius IV.*

* Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, pp. 148, 242.

tures are admitted to be infallible, the question is whether, the infallible Scriptures being in our possession, there is any need to appeal from them to another standard.

Romanism has the double and impossible task of proving that it is the only true Church, thus anathematizing all others, and also that it is infallible; or else, despising the method of argument because it cannot profit by its service, it must fall back on the easy but irrational method of demanding to be believed on its own bare assertion. Now it tries the one course and again the other. Where reason and Scripture can render the shadow of support, they are put under contribution; where they fail to give any semblance of help, Romanism commands us, under threat of perdition, to submit to its tremendous assumptions. Nor can we deny that the "implicit faith" of some respondents appears equal to any, the most extravagant, demand on their credulity.

(1) *Grounds.* What are the principal arguments in support of this claim?

(*a*) *Necessity.* It is contended that the infallibility of the Church is necessitated by human ignorance and weakness, often accompanied by illiteracy and lack of opportunity for investigation, causing incompetency to judge between truth and error. It is said to be essential for prevention of heresy, for settling disputes, and for affording certitude and mental rest to those who are perplexed to know what ought to be believed and done. And we are told that God, foreseeing the need, would not omit so necessary a provision.

This argument is *à priori*, presuming to judge before the fact what means God must adopt to secure His ends. On the same principle, it might be argued that God, foreseeing

the proneness of each man to err, must have provided against error by endowing him with infallibility. The unsoundness of the argument in either case is obvious from the fact that God has not taken that course; and the *à priori* probability is of no weight against the contrary facts.

The argument assumes that it was an end with God to produce somewhere among men an infallible judgment of the truth. But of that we have no proof; and experience would lead us to think He had no such purpose.

As to our incompetency, it has been already shown that the Scriptures are sufficiently clear, full, and pertinent to impart all the knowledge and certitude necessary to salvation, which is confirmed by the fact that multitudes of the illiterate, without any idea of infallibility in the Church, *have*, by the guidance of Scripture, attained salvation.

And if infallibility was intended to prevent or remove heresies inside or outside the Church of Rome, and to settle doctrinal controversies, history tells how signally it has failed.

Experience proves that the needs specified are better met by the unchanging word of God in holy Scripture. When therefore it is said that there must be infallibility in the Church somewhere, and consequently it must be in the Church of Rome as the true Church, it is a sufficient answer to deny that it need be in any part of the Church; and it will be shown presently that, if it did exist, the Church of Rome would not be the most likely place in which to find it.

There is no cogency in the contention that the infallibility of the Church is necessary in order to define and

certify the canon of Scripture. For our historic proof of the canon we are indebted, not to the Church of Rome as such, but to the testimony of the Church in a broader sense; that is, chiefly as it is gathered from individual writers and ancient monuments of different Churches, and especially from the writings of Fathers who knew nothing of the papal notion of infallibility. So far from being the sole and unerring witness of the canon, the Church of Rome has proved itself a tainted witness by decreeing the canonicity of the Apocrypha.

But precise knowledge of the canon is not necessary to salvation. Men were saved by the teaching of a part of the Bible before the rest was composed, and again by a part of what was extant at the time, having no definition of the canon. Though desirable, a full and exact view of the canon is not necessary to salvation; still less is it necessary that any Church be made infallible in order to define the canon.

(*b*) *Scripture built on the Church.* It is said by Romanists as by Anglicans, the Scriptures are built on the Church, and therefore inferior in authority. I deny both the premiss and the conclusion. The Old Testament certainly preceded the Christian Church. The New Testament practically came into existence *with* the Church, and that centuries prior to the existence of the Church of Rome as we now know it. The Church of Christ is built on the teaching of the "apostles and prophets" (Eph. ii. 20), and on the truth confessed by St. Peter (Matt. xvi. 18).* Men are made Christians and joined in Church membership by the truth

* "Every apostolic Church was created by the preaching of the word." —Prof. A. M. Fairbairn, *Contemp. Rev.*, Feb., 1891.

communicated through the Scripture, which therefore, in the order of causation, precedes the Church.

Were the order inverted, it would not prove the infallibility of the Church, much less of the Roman Church. The Jewish Church was not supreme over its Scriptures, because some of them came into being after it was founded. Nor is the Christian Church supreme over any portions of the New Testament which were written after the Church began. Indeed, the infallibility of the Scriptures rendered that of the Church needless and improbable. The Scripture is pole-star to the Church, not the Church to the Scripture.

(*c*) *Gift of the Spirit.* That our Lord promised His Spirit to apostolic men for a work peculiar to themselves, and also to His followers of all ages for another purpose, affords no reason to believe the Spirit would make the Church for all time infallible. Millions receive the grace of the Spirit who never dream that it makes them infallible judges of doctrine. The Paraclete abides with the Church to make it holy, not infallible.

(*d*) *Appeal to Scripture.* The Church of Rome does not refrain from appealing to Scripture and reasoning therefrom in the manner of a fallible expositor, in support of its dogma. It thus completes the circle, proving its own infallibility by the doctrine of Scripture, and the doctrine of Scripture by its own infallibility. This reasoning, besides being circular, virtually admits the supreme authority of Scripture, or why appeal to it to decide the infallibility of the Church? The Scripture never so appeals to the Church.

The Scriptures, however, decide against the appellant.

The texts relied on do not favour the dogma in question. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20), whether addressed to the ministry or the Church, says nothing about infallibility. Nor does the promise of Christ to be with two or three assembled in His name (Matt. xviii. 20). If the Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth," the office belongs no more to the Roman than the Greek and Protestant Churches; and whether to one or the other, there is no mention of infallibility. "He that heareth you heareth Me" (Luke x. 16), was spoken to the seventy who for a temporary mission were empowered to work miracles. To infer that the Church through all time is infallible because the Holy Ghost specially guided the council at Jerusalem (Acts xv.), is about as conclusive as to infer that the gift of tongues abides with the Church because it was bestowed on the day of Pentecost. Of course the Church must govern itself; but that is not infallibility, nor power to deliver new revelations. To hold "the keys" of doctrine was not given to any but those who had to lay down for all men the terms of salvation in the gospel. That being completed, the gift in later times would have been superfluous.

(2) *Objections.* The objections to the dogma are as strong as its supports are weak.

(*a*) It is a serious drawback, that in the view of its adherents the seat of infallibility has been so shifting. A few have supposed it to reside in the Church "diffusively," that is, in the whole clergy. Now we are told it is in the scattered bishops representing the Church; then in the bishops assembled whose decisions are approved by the

whole Church, and others dispense with such approval. Again, it has been said to have its seat in a general council; others say in the council with the pope at its head. Some say the council must be convened by him, while others say its conclusions must be confirmed by the pope and the Church. Some understand its seat to be in the pope and the bishops, and others in the pope alone; while yet others limit it to the official or *ex cathedrâ* utterances of the pope on doctrine or morals.* This difficulty in fixing the whereabouts of the seat excites a reasonable doubt of its being anywhere. In addition to the task of believing the Church infallible on its own profession, is the believer to face the bewilderment of judging between these conflicting statements? or if he must take the word of the last claimant to infallibility, what is he to think of the multitudes who depended for salvation on the mistaken claimants? Verily the more we search for the infallibility of the Church the harder it is to find.

(*b*) The title to infallibility appears altogether invalid when we recall that the Church of Rome, putting forth the claim for itself exclusively, is not the Church of Christ, but at best only a section of it, and too often far from the purest in doctrine and morals, its assumption of great names such as "catholic," "apostolic," and "holy" notwithstanding. To affirm, with Bellarmin the Jesuit, that "the Church is an assembly of men, united in the profession of one and the same Christian faith, and in the communion of the same sacraments, under the government of their lawful pastors, but especially of the Roman pontiff," is simply an audacious form of the fallacy which

* See Hefele, *Hist. Councils*, Introd., pp. 49–52.

begs the conclusion in the definition.* John Wesley's truer definition admits of no such device: "The catholic Church, that is, the whole body of men, endued with faith working by love, dispersed over the whole earth." Millions have died in the faith who lived before or outside the Roman Church.

In order to assert its own infallibility, the Roman community is obliged to unchurch and unchristianize, or ignore, at least half the disciples of Christ throughout the world; and in doing so goes far towards unchristianizing itself. And as to anathematize all other Christian bodies is the logical outcome of claiming infallibility, and both hang together, the inherent falsehood of the right to anathematize involves the falsehood of the claim to infallibility.

Whether the Church be taken to mean the invisible Church of all true saints, or the visible Church of all professing Christians who hold the faith and obey the law of Christ, it cannot be commensurate and coterminous with the Church of Rome. Consequently, if the Church were infallible, the gift could not be confined to the Roman communion, but must be shared by all the sections of the Church. But as the non-Roman half of the Church has no consciousness of, or belief in, the existence of the gift, and as it is so difficult to find it in the only section which professes to have it, we may justly infer that it exists nowhere.

* The stricter idea of the Church includes the clergy only, and at times none but the pope; as when one of the ablest Jesuits, Gretser of Ingoldstadt, said, "when we speak of the Church we mean the pope," another way of saying with Cajetan that the Church is the slave of the pope, and a match to Louis the Fourteenth's assumption "I am the State." See Janus, p. 37.

As the Roman Church lacks catholicity, so it does *unity*, as may be seen in its notorious internal differences of faith and practice. Passing by the internal antagonisms which resulted in the separate existence of the Greek and Protestant Churches, the Old Catholics, the Waldenses, Lollards, Moravians, and others whose alienation infallibility, had it been real, ought to have prevented, what are we to say of Arianism and the smaller heresies which remained in the Church long after the Council of Nicæa? What of the quarrels between Augustinianism and Pelagianism, Thomism and Scotism, the schools of Anselm and Abélard, Jansenism and Jesuitism, Gallicanism and Ultramontanism, and between the different orders of priests? Some of the popes have been condemned as heterodox, one council has contradicted another, and disunion is traceable in all directions.

Its claim to be the *holy* Church ill compares with the holiness of other communities, and with its known moral laxity in certain ages. The ambition of a Hildebrand, the brutality of a Borgia, the horrors of the Inquisition, the immoral intrigues of the Jesuits, the traffic in indulgences, the relations of the popes to temporal powers, the general debasement of the Middle Ages, the attempts of Rome to exterminate other Christian communities, to extinguish civil and religious liberty, and to terrorise its own children by ghostly fears, are but some of the foul stains on the character of the Roman Church, in the light of which its assumption of exclusive or pre-eminent holiness is a travesty.

It would seem as if its chief reliance, however, were on "*apostolicity*," connecting every bishop with the apostles

by an unbroken series of episcopal ordinations, and so identifying the present Church of Rome with that of the apostles. This "fable," as Wesley called it, lies at the root of most of the grovelling superstitions and priestly assumptions which to-day, in the name of Christ, obscure the truth and hinder the growth of charity and true catholicity among professing Christians. It makes the Church depend on, if not consist of, the clergy. It makes a John Tetzel and a Roderic Borgia, "the Nero of pontiffs," ministers of Christ, and declares a Peter Waldo, a John Bunyan, a Robert Moffat, a Richard Watson, a John Angel James, a Matthew Simpson, disqualified for the office. It assumes, what history does not verify, an indefeasible succession of ordinations from St. Peter. It applies to ordination a sacerdotal meaning nowhere held in the New Testament. It gives a non-scriptural sense to the episcopal office. It arrogates exclusive rights to the succession of apostles, which, if valid, would belong equally to the Eastern Church. And on this flimsy basis rests the whole fabric of the only true Church!

But if the succession could be established, that would not prove that the peculiar gifts of the apostles had descended, or were ever designed to descend, to after times, and least of all to such a Church as that of mediæval and modern Rome. The apostles had personally seen and were directly commissioned by Jesus Christ. In order to found Christianity they were endowed with supernatural knowledge and power. They were limited to a very small number, and in point of time to the primal age which required their offices. They were not diocesans, but held universal authority in a general and undefined way over all

Churches. These were qualifications adapted to that time alone, and are manifestly wanting in those who profess to inherit their gifts. The modern claimants might as reasonably say they inherit the authority of Jacob or Moses.

As to apostolicity of *doctrine*, could anything be more heterogeneous to the New Testament than the dogmas of Trent? To a Church so wanting in what it calls the "notes" of the Church, catholicity, unity, sanctity, and apostolicity, it is vain to look for infallible guidance. And if the "notes" are determined by Scripture and not by the Church itself, Scripture must be the supreme rule.

(*c*) Nor do the Scriptures hold out the prospect of this gift to the Church or any part of it. They rather seek to furnish in themselves a standard sufficient without further supernatural instruction, which renders any other supreme standard an illegitimate pretender. They were written that we "might know the certainty" of the foundation facts (Luke i. 4), and that we "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing we might have life through His name" (John xx. 31). They are able to make us wise unto salvation, and to completely furnish the man of God unto every good work (2 Tim. iii. 15–17). They have a right to rule the Church; therefore, when the Church insists on ruling them, it is guilty of arrogant disobedience.

(*d*) If our vindication of the right and duty of private judgment is just, it follows that the Church has no right to bar our way to the direct use of the Scriptures by compelling us to accept its interpretation as supreme. The dogma of infallibility, which involves this course, can-

not be either just or true. For God could not invest us with a right and a duty, and at the same time authorize the Church to nullify them. If our private judgment be too errant or too ignorant to ascertain the authority and import of the Scriptures, it is *à fortiori* for the same reason incompetent to ascertain the infallibility and teaching of the Church.

(*c*) The alleged inerrability of the Church, giving the supreme rule, is *inadequate* to the end.

The repose of faith it affords is *unreal.* Under the euphemistic name of "*implicit faith,*" it means that much of the object of faith may never have been thought of by the believer; for example, to believe in the infallibility of the Church implies belief in whatever the Church may teach, though at present it be unknown, as, to use Newman's illustration, faith in our Lord's divinity implies faith in His eternity, or as to admit one thing in science is to admit all its unknown consequences. But in these cases the consequences are not really believed before they are perceived. One does not believe in the eternity of Christ before the idea arises. Unless a man divest himself of reason, as soon as he sees that his adoption of one position involves by logical necessity the further adoption of a manifest absurdity, he asks whether the first position is not unsound. Thus he first believes in the infallible Church, and afterwards the Church requires him to believe in transubstantiation. "Implicit faith," according to Rome, does not allow him to draw back; but reason reopens the question of infallibility, and decides against it rather than accept self-contradictions as its consequence. But if he resolve to adhere to the infallibility at all costs, what sort of rest

does he get under the burden of believing the dogma of transubstantiation? How can that satisfy the intellect which affronts it by impossible demands? Can the soul repose in a full sense of security as on the rock of eternal truth when what affects to be that truth has either never been presented or conceived, or, being conceived, contradicts itself or some indisputable truth? In proportion as the mind is allowed to act freely, the boasted certitude is underlaid by troublesome misgiving. No wonder if the mind burst its bonds and fling off the dogma which seeks to hold it captive.

Men's minds may become so weary of controversy, or so averse from investigation, as to be prepared to accept almost any teacher who offers to relieve them of all further trouble, and assures them with sufficient emphasis and reiteration. But even then, one thinks there must be a latent dissatisfaction, which, on the awaking of reason, may develop into active protest or rebellion. To offer to the heart certainty of a doctrine from which reason cannot but dissent is to propose the slumber of delusion instead of the repose of faith.

Amid the distractions of controversy a man's mind may become so morbidly unsettled as to feel that he must make his choice between unbelief and entire surrender to the authority of the Church; and, preferring the latter alternative, he may fondly fancy he has found rest. But sooner or later he will be overtaken by the nemesis of his recreancy to reason, and prove how delusive was the promise of rest. Retaining our freedom, we are by no means in the dilemma of having to choose one or the other of these two evils. A path of intelligent faith and

hope remains open to us in the supreme guidance of Scripture. We are not obliged by the logical necessities of the case either to place ourselves in the power of ecclesiastics professing to speak in the Divine name, and to be driven by them we know not whither, or to relinquish our firm faith in Christ. We refuse alike to fall into the crushing arms of an "infallible Church," and to cast ourselves into the restless sea of unbelief. We prefer to abide with cheerful confidence by the written word, which has weathered many a previous storm, and justified its claims in proportion as it has been put to the test of experience.

If somewhere in the Church of Rome there be a seat of infallibility, by far the greater part of mankind are so many removes from it, and dependent on so many fallible intermediaries, that its value to them is reduced to insignificance. It is not pretended that they too are infallible. Then what certainty have they that the *credenda* have not suffered serious damage in their passage through so many bishops, priests, and teachers? The priest who informs his flock what dogmas are to be believed in order to salvation does not profess to be infallible. He may err, or his informants may have erred. His flock cannot trace the matter to its source; if they wished to inspect all the infallible decisions, they must first find them, and then wade through a library of volumes containing them. Their mental repose depends after all on fallible fellow men.*

Newman, objecting to Chillingworth's argument that to make the infallible oracle sufficient the recipient must also

* "Suppose a central infallible Church to exist, it is not one in ten thousand that can put himself in direct communication with its supreme governors."—Whately, *The Search after Infallibility*, p. 28.

be infallible, holds that the Catholic believer is not infallible, but is certain, "by a deliberate assent given expressly after reasoning." * But how greatly this reduces the degree of certainty for Catholics! Being fallible, each one can only have that amount of certitude which his reason makes out by probable evidence. On that principle he must believe the Church infallible because it tells him so, but only so far as that belief is supported by evidence. But what proportion of Catholics believe in the infallibility on "deliberate assent given expressly after reasoning"? Are Catholics not encouraged to believe it on the mere word of the clergy? The choice seems to be between unthinking dormancy and a wakefulness of reason more likely to disturb or destroy faith than to give it rest. In the matter of securing absolute certitude the Romanist is evidently not a whit better off, but worse, than the Protestant who takes the Bible into his own hands, and by prayerful study, with all available helps, searches for the mind of God.

(*f*) A "reasoning" inquirer may easily find his way to assurance of the Church's infallibility blocked by the known results of the dogma in the past. Not to refer further to the countenance given to the breach of the second commandment, the absurdities of transubstantiation, installation of men in the place of God, multiplication of sacraments, and the travesty of future retribution, as already remarked, the infallibility has refuted itself by thrusting the books of the Apocrypha into the canon, and so fathering their follies on the Holy Spirit. And as the infallible Church cannot go back, its only course is to affect an infallible interpretation of the books.

* *Grammar of Assent*, p. 222.

(*g*) The claim is condemned by the fact that the *Christian Church in the earliest centuries was unconscious* of infallibility in itself. Constantine declared the decisions of the Nicæan Council (A.D. 325) Divine; and gradually from the fourth century what was at first only intended to have the force of ecclesiastical law came to be regarded as the unerring mind of the Holy Spirit, given through the councils.* But the modern notion of infallibility had no place with the early Fathers.

7. *Tradition.* In the Church of Rome the authority of Scripture is lowered by placing it on a level with tradition.

There is a legitimate ecclesiastical tradition in the testimony which the Christian Church bears to the early facts of Christianity, rendering valuable help to our faith. Wanting that tradition, our knowledge of the formation of the canon and of the historic character of the Scriptures would have been much scantier than it is, and the strain on our faith greater. "We rely upon the tradition, not so much to tell us what the word of God in Christ is, but rather to assure us that this word of God is preserved for us in our sacred writings." †

There was also an earlier apostolic tradition, by which the authoritative teaching of the apostles, oral or written, was preserved until it could take permanent form in the Scriptures.‡

The illegitimate kind of tradition is the oral teaching of Christ and the apostles, not recorded in the New Testament,

* Salmon, *Infallibility*, pp. 444, 606.

† Ladd, *Doc. Script.*, p. 551.

‡ See 2 Thess. iii. 6–10; 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12; 2 Thess. ii. 15; 1 Cor. xi. 2–23, xv. 3; Jude 3; 2 Pet. ii. 21; Acts xvi. 4.

but handed down in the Church through the ages, with such additions or developments as the Church, under the Spirit, may have made from time to time; the whole being of equal authority with the Scriptures, and equally necessary to salvation. Its so called authority and necessity are its most objectionable features, and rest on no evidence.

Scripture, and not, as Rome says, tradition, is the evidential ground of the sanctity of the Lord's day and the baptism of infants. And if tradition is the only support of such Roman tenets as mariolatry, purgatory, sacrifice of the mass, and the five additional sacraments, so much the worse for the tenets.

Indeed some of the teachings of this tradition are so inconsistent with the Scriptures, and for other reasons so incredible, that the tradition itself, on those subjects, is unworthy of belief.

Scripture never intimates that its Divine function is to be shared by tradition, any more than it does that both should be subject to the authority of the Church. It was the less likely to do so, inasmuch as the effect would have been to supersede its own unchangeable doctrine by the admission of a weak and unaccredited partner. Tradition, put on a level with Scripture, is worse than unwritten law made of equal force with statute law.

Much that occurred in apostolic times is credibly reported by tradition; but to invest tradition with superhuman authority is not only superfluous, seeing the Bible contains all things necessary to salvation, but retrograde, as the rule of the Bible is thereby impaired. Justly did the Fathers respect the testimony of their predecessors; but they did not receive it as they did the Scripture. The

subsequent growth of reliance on tradition, in both East and West, was an element of the sacerdotalism which darkened the middle ages.

To tell a person of average position he must believe as required by tradition obliges him to master some hundreds of volumes in which it is now written, failing which he must trust the priesthood to inform him of the nature and extent of his duty. The parallel between this case and that of the Pharisees, who "made void the word of God because of their tradition," "teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men," is so close that one sees not how the Master's condemnation can fall on the one and not on the other.*

8. "*Development.*" To help out the dogma of tradition, and to get over the difficulty of the wide difference between patristic and mediæval doctrines, Newman, advancing on earlier writers, propounded a theory of "development" far from acceptable to all Catholics, according to which the pre-existent belief of the Church is augmented from latent germs by the operation of a general growth of consentient feeling and thought under the control of the Holy Spirit, and in due time formulated and sanctioned by the infallible Church as settled articles of faith. Augustine held a view

* "Perhaps the first complete authoritative appeal to tradition, in tacit preference to the written word (though even then not distinctly alleged as an absolutely separate ground for faith), may be considered to have occurred in support of the peculiarly unscriptural innovation of image worship. 'We,' say the bishops of the second Nicene Council (A.D. 787), 'following the Divine instructions of the holy Fathers and the traditions of the catholic Church, decree with all accuracy, etc., that the venerable and holy images shall be placed in the holy churches of God. Thus the instruction of our holy Fathers is established, to wit, the testimony of the catholic Church.'" —Archer Butler, *Romanism*, p. 45.

which looked in the same direction. The mediæval and modern divergence of doctrine from the position of the early Church is so great that Newman thinks the "*disciplina arcani*" or esoteric teaching of the Fathers, insufficient to account for it. But the same inadequacy attaches to this theory of development. The gulf between the teaching of Scripture and that of Rome on, for example, the conception, assumption, and worship of Mary, the Lord's supper, and the Christian ministry, is so wide that the latter could not originate in the former. The theory is subtle, but not convincing. Moreover, if the theory be true, it shatters the boast of doctrine one and immutable in the Church of Rome. For there can be no immutable rule of faith where new and obligatory articles may be continually coming into view with no more affinity between the germs and the fruit than in the cases just cited.

Nor does experience lend any real support to the theory.* The famous canon of Vincentius (*Quod semper, quod ubique, et quod ab omnibus*), what is believed always, everywhere, and by all must be true, on which Romanists have relied, was abandoned by Newman; and well it might be, not simply at the bidding of his theory, but because of the many and great mutations of doctrine in the Roman community.

9. *Councils.* It was incumbent on the Church of Rome to define the *organ* by which its infallible decisions find expression. From the fourth century downwards it was

* Prof. Ladd's theory of development of doctrine, by means of the *ethico-religious consciousness* of the Christian Church, bears some resemblance to Newman's theory. Ladd's "norm" is akin to Newman's "germ." But Ladd does not, like Newman, endow the product with infallibility. See *Doc. Script.*, vol. ii., p. 550.

held with increasing assurance that the mouthpiece was the councils, and especially the œcumenical or universal councils of the Church as distinguished from those which were only national, diocesan, and local; though non-œcumenical synods were sometimes considered inerrant if sanctioned by the pope.* The gradual absorption of the conciliar power may have been hastened by the difficulty of assembling men from all parts of a wide and enlarging Christendom.†

It says little for the inerrancy of councils that the

* According to the learned Roman Catholic bishop Hefele, the following are the synods of first rank. "The universal or œcumenical *councils*, at which the bishops, and other privileged persons, from all the ecclesiastical provinces in the world are summoned to be present under the presidency of the pope or his legates, and are bound to attend, unless in case of reasonable hindrance; and whose decisions are then received by the whole Church, and have the force of law." The "other privileged persons" are such as appear for, or by consent of the bishops. So the proper persons to compose the council are bishops. Hefele takes such councils to be infallible only when dealing with faith or morals, and having the approval of the pope. The first general council (Nicene) was held in such esteem that respect for councils rapidly developed into ascription of inerrancy and direct Divine authority; until pope Gregory the Great, in the sixth century, said, "I venerate the four first œcumenical councils equally with the four Gospels." But gradually the power of councils was overgrown and smothered by that of the popes, whose triumphs culminated in this nineteenth century.—*Hist. Councils*, vol. i., pp. 54, 3, 22, 53.

† Romanists have disagreed amongst themselves as to what councils were œcumenical; especially as to the inclusion of the five Lateran, and those of Vienne, Constance, and Basle. Some get over the difficulty by taking those parts of them as œcumenical and valid which were not inimical to the supremacy of the pope (Hefele, vol. i., pp. 55, 56, 62, 63). By a similar device the opposite party took those parts as valid which ran counter to papal interests. Some count sixteen œcumenical councils. Hefele nineteen: namely, Nicæa, 325; Constantinople, 381; Ephesus, 431; Chalcedon, 451; Constantinople, 553; Constantinople, 680; Nice, 787; Constantinople, 869; Lateran, 1123; Lateran, 1139; Lateran, 1179; Lateran, 1215; Lyons, 1245; Lyons, 1274; Vienne, 1311; Constance, 1414; Basle, 1431; Lateran, 1512; Trent, 1545–1563. And now must be added a twentieth in the Vatican, 1868–1870. The Eastern Church admits the authority of the first seven of these councils.

doctors of the Roman Church have never been all agreed about the powers of councils. Some, especially the Gallicans, have maintained that a council can depose a pope for bad morals or heresy; others say for heresy, but not for morals. Bellarmin said it might depose a pope who could not justify his title to the tiara. The council of Constance deposed John XXIII., though Hefele says such an act is only right when the legitimate pope is a party to it. Others, again, say the pope is not amenable to a council. The pope and his legates rejected the third canon of the council of Constantinople (381); and afterwards popes Leo and Felix III. went far towards denying the authority of the same second council (Hefele, vol. ii., p. 373; vol. i., p. 45). Yet by the sixth century the Latin Church acknowledged it œcumenical, and therefore of infallible authority. Pope Leo refused to sanction the twenty-eighth canon of Chalcedon. The councils of Constance and Basle held that a council was superior to the pope, who, of course, dissented, and declared papal approval necessary to the validity of conciliar decrees.

The case again is weakened by the want of uniformity in the summoning, the composition, the presidency, and the confirmation of the decrees. The civil ruler, the pope, and the two combined, have been by turns the summoning authority. In some cases princes or their servants have been in the council, and again only priests. Sometimes the decrees were signed by the emperor along with the pope, and in other cases by ecclesiastics alone. At one time a prince presides, and more frequently the pope or his legate. The history of councils, along with that of the Roman Church, reveals a course so checkered by diversities

and conflicts that it might well have prevented the publication of Bossuet's *Protestant Variations.*

When we are told that the infallibility of councils was secured by the presence of the Holy Spirit,* how are we to understand His influence on the votes of the minority, or the action of those members who abstained from voting or attending because they could not approve? Was the inerrancy-producing Spirit withheld at the Vatican Council from such members as Hefele, Strassmayer, and Rauscher, and given to the Jesuit majority? For such work the Spirit is nowhere promised in Scripture. Nor have those who pretended to the gift ever produced credentials entitling them to be believed.

It would be superfluous to further discuss conciliar infallibility in relation to the rule of faith since Pius IX., in conjunction with the Jesuits, took the matter into his own hands and brought his Church to acquiesce in his official infallibility and consequent supremacy in faith and morals, notwithstanding the protests of many of the foremost Catholic leaders.

10. *Infallibility of the pope.* The Vatican Council (sixth Lateran) of 1869–70, after centuries of effort on the part of the popes to win absolute supremacy, resolved on the "assumption" of the Virgin, that is, her translation to heaven, also on the dogmatic authorization of the Syllabus of 1864, and on the infallibility of the pope without further appeal in matters of faith and morals for all

* On Feb. 6, 1870, the *Civiltà Cattolica*, the organ of the pope and Jesuits, said: "It is hoped that his infallibility will be defined unanimously by acclamation, by the mouth of the assembled fathers, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost." See *The Pope and the Council*, by Janus, a liberal Catholic, p. 2.

Christians. Pius IX. was only too glad to stamp these decrees with his official sanction, thus making the pope the supreme standard and judge of doctrine and practice, to whose decision all others, including Scripture, are subordinate.

The feat was a triumph of the pope and the Jesuits; but at what cost to the Roman Church yet remains to be seen. The widespread resentment and the secession of the Old Catholics were some of the immediate effects, but the ultimate effects may be greater. Strange if the intellect and conscience of Catholics, surrounded by the freedom of other Churches, do not rise against the tyranny of this dogma, and of the Syllabus which swears war against civil and religious liberty, unless indeed they prefer to yield a nominal assent to "the Church" without real faith.

The history of the council is not calculated to win the approval of honest minds for its decrees. The way was prepared in part by the dogma of the immaculate conception of the Virgin in 1854. The Jesuits worked the movement, playing on the hopes and fears of the bishops, wearing out some dissentients and warning off others, until the 137 fathers who signed the petition counter to that which begged the pope to introduce the question of his own infallibility were reduced in the preliminary council to 88 against 450 in favour of the infallibility, and in the final vote to 2 against 553. But by that time many dissentients had left Rome, and others were unable or unwilling to attend. Considering that of the 1,163 members of the council, of whom 767 actually assembled, 57 were cardinals, officials of the pope, 234 only titular bishops, and 36 titular archbishops representing no dioceses; that the 18,000,000 Catholics of Breslau, Cologne Cambray,

Paris, and Germany were represented by 18 prelates, while Italy had 194 representatives, and that opposition was stifled, it is hard to believe the consensus of the Roman Church was fairly taken, even in that large gathering.*

The announcement of the dogma starts many queries. *E.g.* Is the grace of infallibility continuously in the bishop of Rome, or only as occasion requires? Can he call it into action at will? or is he passive? How is he certain that what he takes for Divine influence is not merely human? Is his decree valid, whether or not he previously obtain the concurrence of a council or others? If the Vatican Council was infallibly inspired, was it competent to give away its office for all future time? If so, may not the pope some day transfer it back to a council or to some other party? And has the council power to withdraw the gift? When the pope dogmatizes infallibly, does he weigh the "pros and cons"? or is it a revelation apart from the exercise of his own reasoning? How does he distinguish his inspired utterances from the rest? how does he know which are *ex cathedrâ*? and how which are matter of faith or morals? Many such queries suggest doubt. But more serious objections present themselves.

It will be apparent that most of the objections so fatal to infallibility in the Church or its councils are equally so to an infallible pope. If inerrancy be not in the Church, it cannot be in any part of it, even its chief officer. Having proved the Scriptures every way sufficient, the transfer of our confidence therefrom to a standard

* Janus, pp. 6, 7, 113–116; Griesinger, *Hist. Jesuits*, pp. 774, 775, 757. The hollowness of the whole proceeding is exposed in *The Pope, the Kings, and the People*, by the Rev. William Arthur, M.A.

inaccessible to most of us, which shifts its seat between Church, bishops, councils, and pope, and which interposes the decisions of a fellow mortal between us and the Scriptures, would be a foolish bargain for ourselves.

(1) The mode of selecting the infallible oracle, now by bishops, then by councils, again by cardinals, and sometimes under dictation or intrigues of civil rulers, warns us against making the change. Is the Holy Spirit pledged to inspire whatever man may be chosen? If the pope makers are divinely guided, how came they to choose two or three contemporary popes, who employed their gifts in anathematizing one another? Multitudes would find it all but impossible to verify all the links of selection, appointment, and ordination on which the unbroken succession of true popes is dependent. With so much twisting and gyrating of the chain through the centuries from St. Peter to Leo XIII., they could not be certified of Leo's infallibility.

(2) Then, again, no bishop of Rome ever represents the whole Church of Christ on earth. Half of Christendom repudiates his inerrant authority. If the dogma of apostolic succession compels the Roman community to declare itself exclusively the Church of Christ, so much worse for the dogma and all it dominates. A decree involving logical consequences contrary to facts is unworthy of credit. Verily to common sense the manifest presence of the Spirit of Christ, producing "righteousness, peace, and joy," according to Scripture, is a surer mark of the true Church than a long and, if not an imaginary, an unverifiable chain of official arrangements.

(3) If it be now and for ever clear that infallibility centres in the bishop of Rome, and did so from the

beginning, it follows that the gift never was in the Church or its hierarchy, but only in its chief officer. Then the decree of 1870 charges falsehood on all the bishops and councils who claimed that it was wholly or partially in them, and on those bishops of Rome who held the same view; and consequently the decrees of all these parties must have been invalid. The infallible Church is thus reduced to one unerring man.

(4) The dogma of papal infallibility shows badly in the light of *history*. To say the present pope is infallible because he is pope implies the same for all his predecessors. But this will not bear examination.

Immoral popes. It is beyond dispute that with many of the popes and their courtiers immorality, sometimes of the grossest kind, was rife. Vice nestled in and around the chair of those who professed to be in the seat of Christ. Does Christ choose to convey His mind on moral sanctity through a channel so foul? Friends of the Papacy, seeing it hopeless to defend the morals of the popes, argue that the immoral character of the medium makes no difference to the truth and divinity of the message; as if Christ would select for His representative a creature whose character cannot but be loathsome and abominable to Him. Or, according to the argument of others, can it be that the virtue of the office makes the blackest wrong right? Let those believe it who can. The comparison attempted with the prophecies of Caiaphas and Balaam, who in solitary instances were made involuntary witnesses of the truth to their own shame, will not carry sufficiently to save the dogma. The vilest pontiff was alleged to be in the place of God; we have no attestation

of his prophetic office apart from his own pretension. His official deliverances were often immoral in themselves, and contrary to truth. In all these respects he was quite diverse from Balaam and Caiaphas.

Heretical popes. Judged from either the evangelical or papal standpoint, some of the popes have unquestionably erred in delivering doctrine and morality—a fact sufficient of itself to confute the claim to infallibility. *E.g.* in 1773 the mischievous intrigues and pernicious influence of the Jesuits, on account of which they were expelled from almost every Christian state in Europe, had grown to such height that the bull of Clement XIV. abolished, suppressed, and did away with the order as an intolerable evil. In 1814, Pius VII., in another bull, decreed that "the Society of Jesus shall, by virtue of our full apostolic power, be renewed in all the countries of the Christian Church, confirmed in its former organization, rules, legal powers, liberties, offices of teaching, preaching, and confession, colleges, houses, provinces, subordinate to the immediate patronage, protection, and obedience of the Holy See, and freed and released from all the consequences of a resolution of abolition devised in the form of a brief by Clement XIV."*

In the fourth century, Liberius, bishop of Rome, was deposed and banished by the emperor Constantius for his opposition to Arianism, and restored on his signing an Arian creed, though he afterwards condemned Arianism.† In the fifth century, pope Zosimus favoured the Pelagianism of Celestius, who denied original sin; he also

* Griesinger, pp. 648, 661, 662.

† See *The Popes of Rome*, by Wm. Tayler, p. 41.

rebuked the opposition offered by the African bishops to the doctrine of Celestius; but afterwards the same pope concurred in the anti-Pelagian judgment of the council of Carthage against Celestius.* Pope Nicolas I., in the ninth century, pronouncing to the Bulgarians for the validity of baptism by a Jew or a pagan, added that baptism was valid in the name either of the Trinity or of Jesus only. This is contrary to the teaching of Rome both before and after.† Pope Vigilius, in the sixth century, pronounced certain writings (of Theodore, Theodoret, and Ibas) orthodox, and the following year condemned them as Nestorian, thereby bringing on himself the condemnation and excommunication of the fifth œcumenical council.‡ Afterwards he submitted to the judgment of the council, and confessed he had been a tool of Satan, but had now received Divine light.

In the fifteenth century a bull of Nicolas V. declared all decrees and censures of his predecessor, Eugenius IV., against the council of Basle, null and void. In the fourteenth century, Clement V. did the same by the bulls of Boniface VIII. against France. In the fifteenth century, pope Alexander VI. decreed that Savonarola must be burned for his wickedness; in the eighteenth century pope Benedict XIV. thought the same man worthy of canonization. It is said pope John XXII. did not believe in the immortality of the soul.

* Hefele says Zosimus was deceived (*Hist. Con.*, vol. ii., p. 456). How then was he infallible? And how came the same infallible pope to found his judgment in another matter on certain canons as Nicene when they were really Sardican? (Hefele, vol. ii., p. 454.)

† *E.g.* by pope Vigilius. See Bingham, *Antiquities*, vol. iii., p. 427.

‡ See Du Pin, vol. v., p. 47.

The most notorious case is that of pope Honorius I. in the seventh century. He was condemned by the sixth œcumenical council for having pronounced in favour of Monothelitism. He was anathematized by name, and his writings burned as heretical. This fact has never been reconciled with papal infallibility. Pope Adrian VI., in the sixteenth century, before his election asserted that several popes had been heretical.

The bulls of the popes have put nations under interdicts, released subjects from allegiance to their rulers, dethroned kings, demanded the homage of all nations to the pontiff, encouraged the people to torture, burn, or kill anti-papal Christians, denouncing their faith as damnable heresy, and bidding the secular power devastate their lands by fire and sword. But there was policy enough to fulminate when it was safe, and to be silent when the power of the adversary made it otherwise. Is it possible to believe all these decrees emanated from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?

To evade the force of this objection it is said the inerrancy applies only to what the pope delivers *ex cathedrâ*; that is, officially as the mouthpiece of Christ in matters of faith or morals. But not to speak of the uncertainty concerning the matters to be thus included and excluded, it is enough to remember that nothing could be more closely identified with faith and morals than the conflicting decrees just cited.

Is this inerrant oracle redeemed from folly and falsehood by its latest performances? The dogma of the immaculate conception, previously an open question among Catholics, pushed through by Pius IX. and the Jesuits, is a monument of unreasoning superstition, and of a piece with the dogma of the assumption of the Virgin. The dogmatizing of the

Syllabus was a declaration of war against modern civilization with its civil and religious liberty. The dogma of infallibility was a fitting climax to an edifice of assumptions, tenets, and laws repugnant alike to Scripture and reason. Such being the effects of papal infallibility, Christianity is far better without it.

(5) It tells against the dogma that it took definite form so late. It was to be expected that in the early ages the bishop of Rome, the chief centre of civil and ecclesiastical life, would command great respect, and that his advice and concurrence would be sought by religious parties and civil rulers; and it may be easily conceived how in course of time respect would grow into obedience, moral influence into ecclesiastical authority, advice into law, and official guidance and rule into a claim to infallible wisdom direct from God, to resist which involved peril of hell. But the process took many centuries to mature.

Bishop Jewel's challenge to the Romanists to find proof of the bishop of Rome's supremacy in the first six centuries has never been successfully met. When, in the sixth century, John bishop of Constantinople styled himself "universal bishop," Gregory bishop of Rome declared, "Whosoever calleth himself universal bishop, or desireth to be so called, is, in his pride, the forerunner of antichrist; because, in his pride, he setteth himself before others." "No one of my predecessors would ever consent to this name." At the council of Chalcedon, in the fifth century, pope Leo the Great spoke solemnly on the Eutychian controversy; but also said his view had only force by the agreement of the bishops assembled. Pope Siricius, in the fourth century, declined to pronounce against the heresy of

Bishop Bonosus because it would be *ultra vires*, and he looked to the decision of the bishops of the province.* After the notion of infallibility had arisen about the fourth century, its seat was supposed to be in the Church; and not for long afterwards was it centered in the bishop of Rome.†

If papal infallibility be true, it is most extraordinary that, after being first mooted, it should have been for so many centuries disputed within the Roman Church itself, and never defined and fully delivered by supreme authority until the meeting of the Vatican council in the nineteenth century. Pope Urban VIII. uttered the contention of many popes and Catholics when he cursed any who should appeal from a papal edict to a general council.‡ But the Synod of Basle, and other synods and doctors, as stiffly maintained the inferiority of popes to councils. It is as suspicious as it it is strange that Pius IX. should be the first to settle the dogma, if it was true and necessarily operative throughout all preceding ages of the Christian era: a drawback well matching the confinement of the discovery, and of its operation to one out of the many Churches in Christendom.

(6) Nothing more effectually bars our acceptance of the dogma under notice than its astounding lack of credentials where credentials ought to be the clearest and strongest. It is simply amazing that a fellow man under our intel-

* Janus, p. 69. Hefele, vol. ii., p. 394.

† "For fully ten centuries after the birth of Christ complete silence reigns throughout the whole Christian Church respecting this, and neither any of the old confessions of faith, any catechism whatever, nor any single writing of the Church, contains one word about the pope and his infallibility. During the first four centuries there were, indeed, no popes, but merely bishops of Rome. . . . There exists no trace of any decrees that they may have issued during this period."—Griesinger, *Hist. Jesuits*, p. 742.

‡ Griesinger, p. 750.

lectual and moral limitations should, on his own *ipse dixit*, demand our implicit faith in his miraculous gift; as if the more extraordinary the thing offered to faith the less the need of evidence.

It is inconsistent for the supreme oracle and judge of faith to appeal for support to the Scriptures, seeing (*ex hypothesi*) they derive their authority from him. But allowing the appeal, the result throws additional doubt on the dogma. For instance, that every pope inherits infallibility from St. Peter (Matt. xvi. 18); that St. Peter, and not the things he confessed, was the foundation rock of the Church; that St. Peter was endowed with supremacy over all the other apostles and the whole Church; that he held a gift of infallibility peculiar to himself among the apostles; that his conversion and strengthening of his brethren referred to inerrancy rather than personal salvation; that St. Peter's inspiration, but not his miraculous power, descended to all the bishops of Rome alone,—are propositions which have been often asserted emphatically, but never proved.

Reason is often appealed to for support of the dogma, but is rebuked for its temerity if it ask for evidence on which faith may rest. Such attempts at argument as that there must be infallibility somewhere, and it is not found elsewhere, therefore it must be in the Church of Rome, reason rejects, as it would if any other Church sought to prove itself inerrant by the same fallacy.

In our time a favourite plea for "going over" to the pope is that it secures the guidance of a "living voice" in his person. The supposed value of the idea, however, vanishes on our recollecting how highly figurative is the phrase "living voice" in this case. To almost all Catholics,

and still more to all non-Catholics, the "living voice" is inaudible, and its owner invisible and inaccessible. His very existence is taken on trust. Does he actually utter his decrees *vivâ voce*? Whether it be by voice or pen, how is his dictum more assuring than the "living oracles" of the word? Is it more true, more intelligible, more immutable, more vital or vitalizing than "the faith once delivered to the saints," and recorded for all time in the inspired Scriptures? Moreover the "living voice" of each pope soon becomes silent in death, and his decrees as documentary as the Scriptures. Closely scanned, the "living" element in the case is the pope's natural life, and the advantage seems to lie in the possibility of consulting him somewhat as the oracle at Delphi was consulted. But that he thinks he holds the Divine power in that discretionary form may be doubted. If he did hold it in that way, it would be very liable to abuse. Even on the supposition that the oracular deliverances of popes have been few and far between, it is difficult to believe they were always unaffected by the sinister bias of the oracle.*

It should not be forgotten that Christianity is an *historic* religion, which, in some other questions, the Church of Rome can least afford to ignore. The present cannot be severed from the past in our faith. The historic word,

* *E.g.* when Pope Paul V. issued his bull against our Queen Elizabeth, releasing her subjects from their allegiance to her, and authorizing them to rebel, was he inspired by the Holy Spirit or by his known prejudice as Grand Inquisitor and Jesuit? When Pius IX. decreed the dogma of the immaculate conception, it corresponded exactly with the private opinion he had fondly cherished for long. How came it that the Holy Spirit so often inspired the popes to decree the dogmas most agreeable to their personal wishes, somewhat as Muhammad received new revelations to suit his convenience?

like the historic Jesus, is *present* to the faith of every Christian age, and cannot be superseded by any living man's utterances. Were it otherwise, every "living" pope in his turn might ignore the decrees of all his dead predecessors. He who truly gave the word from above still lives, and makes it life-giving to all who rightly receive it. The advantage of the "living voice" at Rome is but an ecclesiastical fiction.

It is well known that for centuries belief in the pope's supremacy rested on the evidence of documents which were long afterwards discovered to be forgeries, and admitted to be such by Pius IV. and other Catholic officials, though they deceived the greatest men of the middle ages; documents affecting to hand down sayings of early popes, on the strength of which their successors claimed to be supreme. Chief of these were the "Forged Decretals." * The decretal epistles of Isidore, which fraudulently passed for a collection by the Spanish bishop of that name, but were really the forgeries of some other person in the ninth century, pretended to report speeches of earlier popes in maintenance of papal supremacy. About the same time appeared the false decrees of a fourth century council. In the twelfth century, Gratian, a Benedictine monk, compiled a school-book out of some fragmentary documents, which greatly advanced the pontifical assumptions. But since these decretals are now generally allowed to be spurious, the main pillar on which rested belief in the pope's supremacy falls

* "Up to the time of the Isidorian decretals no serious attempt was made anywhere to introduce the neo-Roman theory of infallibility. The popes did not dream of laying claim to such a privilege."—Janus, p. 76.

Pope Nicholas I. in the ninth century was one of the first to stake the claim to papal supremacy on these forgeries.

away, and the monstrous dogma of infallibility, in virtue of which the bishop of Rome claims to rule the faith and morals of the human race, is seen to have no foundation in historic truth.

The proof becomes still more hopeless if we keep in mind that the position to be made good is, not merely that there is infallibility somewhere in the Church or the bishops, but that it centres alone and necessarily in the *bishop of a particular city.* Why the chief officer of the Church should be for all time tied to a certain locality, and take his title from an earthly city rather than from a spiritual society; why it should be impossible for the office ever to lodge in the bishop of any other city than Rome,—no satisfactory reason is apparent. Yet all this is part of the case to be proved before the dogma in question is entitled to credence.

But it is only a part. The dogma implies that the present is the only true pope; that he is invested with superhuman powers; that he may nevertheless be immoral; that his succession to St. Peter, securing to him the apostle's authority, is by an unbroken chain of valid ordinations; that St. Peter was bishop of Rome, primate of the apostles, and vicar of Christ; that his office and authority are inherited by every bishop of Rome; that all who are outside the Church of Rome are outside the Church of Christ, and all professed Christians who refuse allegiance to the pope are schismatics and anathema. If any of these propositions be untrue, the whole fabric falls into ruin. The demand made on our credulity is so enormous, that we may well wonder how the faith of him who believes the dogma can be real, and whether his mind does not play tricks on itself.

Manifestly papal infallibility fails to satisfy the need of the perplexed inquirer craving for reasonable religious certainty. I imagine myself in that unhappy condition, eager to find rest in the sure knowledge of God and His salvation. The fierce struggle of debate, and the incessant battery of unbelief have undermined my confidence. Distracted by the cries, "Lo, here is Christ," "Lo, there," "Lo, nowhere," I am tormented by the demon of uncertainty. Assured that I shall find the repose I long for by implicit faith in the Church, that is, the infallible pope, I bend my thoughts in that direction. But immediately I find myself confronted with insuperable difficulties.

First, I am perplexed to know which part of what the pope delivers is infallible and which not.

Assured that the infallible part is that spoken *ex cathedrâ*, I am still at a loss to know which part is *ex cathedrâ*. Is it when he denounces the king of Italy and proclaims his own right to temporal sovereignty; when he anathematizes all Protestants, and asserts his own infallibility? Where is my criterion for testing the infallible? How can I believe when I see his official utterances alloyed with palpable untruth?

What assurance, again, can I have that his dogma of infallibility is not itself an error, and consequently a piece of blasphemous arrogance, the outcome and instrument of ambition? How can I take his word for it in the absence of reasonable evidence? Moreover, what am I to do when his edicts appear to be the offspring of ignorance, overweening self-sufficiency, persecuting intolerance, or otherwise contrary to the mind of Christ?

Further, how can I trust implicitly in face of dis-

crepancies between the decisions of different popes, between popes and councils, between different doctors of the Church, and between papal teaching and Scripture?

Besides, as I peer into the kind of certainty offered me, I foresee it would impose burdens on my credulity too heavy to be borne so long as I retained freedom of thought; requiring me, for example, to believe firmly, as I would save my soul, that bread and wine under priestly performance become the very body and blood, the soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, who was born, and died, and rose again; and that the same body may be wholly in ten thousand places at the same time. Nay, more, if I put my neck under that papal yoke, I shall be bound, as I would not perish, to believe in my soul whatever dogma, as yet unknown to me, the pope may decree in the future, however unscriptural or absurd it may appear to my judgment, as many were compelled by the dogmas of the immaculate conception and infallibility. To pay this price I am not sufficiently affluent in credulity; and if I were, the value of the certainty would be neutralized by incessant conflict between my trust in the pope and my necessary laws of thought. As I could not stop thinking, I should find no rest. I should still be haunted by the questions whether the infallible person was deluding or deluded, whether both he and I had sufficient warrant for believing him infallible, and how his claim could be sustained in face of Scripture and history. As I could have no direct access to the unerring oracle, and therefore could not obtain the pabulum of doctrine at first hand, but only through many intermediaries, how could I be confident the message I received had not been diluted or

defiled on its way? Should I not get rid of my previous difficulties by gliding into much greater?

It avails not to tell me I may keep my Bible, and the pope or his agents will certify me of its authority and meaning; for who would certify me of his inerrant authority? It seems more difficult to trust the Bible solely on his word than without it, if I may retain my present grounds.

But suppose that I surmounted these huge barriers, and persuaded myself the ultimate basis of Christian faith was the word of a Church or its chief official, I should still have to decide which was the Church so gifted, and why that Church above all the rest. Scant relief should I find in deciding for one by unchurching or anathematizing all others, especially if history informed me that the one preferred was implicated in more foul deeds and was more prone to self-aggrandisement than any other. When I am told to force my way through all these hindrances into the promised land of certainty and mental rest, by ceasing to reason and taking all on the word of the Church, that is, the bishop of Rome, I am asked to commit intellectual suicide, which, from the nature of the case, I cannot do so long as life and sanity remain. I might as well be told to annihilate my own soul. Stranger still, I am to arrive at the determination to extinguish my use of reason by a process of reasoning on the wisdom of trusting all to the pope. I am to reason myself into renunciation of my reason, and then confirm that renunciation by use of my reason, and so acquire an imaginary rest by cheating myself into a great loss, retaining a certainty honeycombed with misgiving. But thus to stultify my rational nature is far more difficult

than to employ it in threading my way to certainty through the intricacies and perils of investigation and discussion. Far and away I prefer intellectual freedom, with exposure to assaults on my reasonable faith, to any advantage that may come from handing myself over to the thraldom of mental inertia under the dictatorial lordship of any fellow man.

Trust in the pope was to save me from the trouble of investigating the truth and import of Scripture; but it turns out that it would either impose upon me the impossible task of ascertaining the credentials of the papal message, or else require me blindfold to take it without credentials. The sure, unerring light proves to be an *ignis fatuus.*

Once more, comparison of Churches apart, I am further staggered on perceiving that in as far as men concur in the pretensions of Rome, the effect is the inflow of earthly riches, power, and glory to the pope and his clergy; and I am perplexed to understand how far desire for these ends consciously or unconsciously inspires the readiness of that hierarchy to assume the vast responsibility of undertaking to be in the place of God—especially as I recollect how the assumption grew for ages with the growth of sacerdotal bigotry and intolerance, and their concomitant laxity of morals and neglect of mental culture. The contrast with the case of the apostles is extreme. I pause to ask myself, can this body which has propagated its dogmas and dominion by intrigues, pains, and penalties, can this body or its chief be the chosen vehicle by which the God of truth and holiness communicates His mind to the children of men? It has so much of the sordid pomp of earth, and so little of the meekness, lowliness, and self-sacrificing

love of Christ and the apostles, that I cannot with the utmost stretch of credulity trust my salvation to its infallibility, but am compelled to turn away from its fair promises, convinced that here is no calm haven in which to ride secure against the storms of outward controversy and the tumult of inward questionings.

There is nothing for it but to retrace my steps. From the thorny road of papal inerrancy, with its bewildering prospect, it is a great relief to turn again to the older way, the rule of Scripture. Here is a guide at once accessible and intelligible to the common people, invariable through all conditions of mankind, and capable of world-wide application. It sufficiently explains the way of salvation for ingenuous minds, yet admits of disbelief or misconstruction by others, and so is suited to our moral probation. It is well accredited as a message of life from God, and yet not so as to over-ride our free, responsible choice; a safe rule confined to no class, Church, or nation, but designed for and adapted to the use of all men.

CONCLUSION.

And now what are our losses and gains? We have been wont to believe the Scriptures mirrored to us the mind of God, especially in the person and work of the Redeemer. From the bitterness of sin and the conflicts of life we have turned to them to see what the Lord would say, and to find there a deep sense of repose. In hours of temptation, weariness, and sorrow their words were a great consolation, allaying our fears and fortifying our best resolves. As in them we thought we heard the voice of God, our grief was assuaged. Our faith and hope rested firmly in their promises. They revealed to us at once our solemn duties and our splendid opportunities. Distracted by the rage of war in theology or ethics, we found in quiet meditation on their pages the tranquillising word of our heavenly Father. They inspired us with calm confidence in face of the great hereafter. We had hoped that with us, as with our fathers, this book would be the oracle and stay of our families, and that when time had borne us past the use of other books, we might, like Sir Walter Scott, find in this our precious companion, lighting up the valley of our transition from earth to heaven. On all that concerned us most profoundly, the contents of the book seemed as the word of God coming out of the veiled infinitude of His glory. Have we lost this inheritance? Have we waked up to find it all a dream? Thank God, No!

We may have lost some rabbinical or mediæval theories of the Divine-human mode in which the Scriptures were pro-

duced, some untenable interpretations and careless methods of exegesis, some overweening estimates or pious abuses of the letter, and other incrustations of human weakness. But that is all gain to the cause of truth. No method is too dear to be abandoned when found untrue.

But to-day our advantages over our predecessors are immense. We have a better text, a better version, a fuller and more luminous science of "introduction," more mature principles of exegesis, an improved analysis of the sacred writings, a more intelligent grasp of their unity, a clearer insight into their meaning, and a more effective putting of their credentials.

Never had we more reason to cherish them with intelligent ardour. Never were they more adapted to accomplish their high purpose. Experience shows that they have nothing to lose, but everything to gain, by honest investigation. Criticism, friendly and adverse, has been the crucible from which they have always emerged as gold refined. Our faith is all the firmer because its grounds have so often withstood the onsets of unbelief.

The Scriptures have not ceased to afford the vision of God, and the authoritative rule of faith and practice. In them we have still the counsel of infinite wisdom and goodness. In them we retain the word which triumphed over ancient paganism, created the Reformation, supplied the evangelical force of Methodism, and will bring on the millennium. Through this night of time the "prophecy of Scripture," given as men of God "were moved by the Holy Ghost," continues instinct as ever with truth and power, and shall continue "until the day break, and the shadows flee away."

APPENDIX I. (p. 90).

The Word of God.

On the meaning of "the word of God" as used in the Bible, and the consequent limitations in our use of the phrase, opinions are much divided.

(i.) The substantive "word" (λόγος, and to some extent ῥῆμα) always carries the notion of emanation, outcoming, or communication. This is prominent in its application to the Son of God. The same notion is apparent when the term is used to denote cause or reason. Used in connexion with a message, there is always the idea of conveying thought in language or other symbol. So it is in God's word to man. His mind uncommunicated or unexpressed is not His word. "The word of God *came*" to Samuel, Shemaiah, Nathan, the Baptist, and others, and through them to the people.

(ii.) His word was thought, not disembodied, but conveyed in speech to be heard or read. The Thessalonians *heard* it, and *received* it, "not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God."* True, some of it was a message delivered by apostles and others before the New Testament was written; but not even then was it conceived of apart from verbal expression. If at that stage the word of God included its expression in language, why

* 1 Thess. ii. 13; Acts xiii. 44, iv. 15, xiii. 5–7; Luke xi. 28, v. 1; Acts iv. 31.

not also when the same message was given in writing? If it was the word of God when heard, why not equally the word of God, and for the same reason, when read?

The case is misrepresented by likening the word to the kernel, and the Scriptures to its shell. There is no such difference between the word and the Scripture. The word cannot be separated from all language and yet remain the word, as the kernel may remain the kernel after separation from the shell. The case is more analogous to the life in the human body, pervading it, and having no existence except in and through it. If anything in the matter is conceivable apart from its expression in language, it is not the word, but the *truth* of which the word is the verbal representation. Hence it is "the word of truth" (Jas. i. 18).

(iii.) We are told the phrase "is never once applied to Scripture itself."* Of course not to mere "Scripture itself," apart from the ideas it embodies. That can hardly be intended by the statement. But if "Scripture itself" means Scripture as expressing ideas, it is not easy to see how the assertion could be sustained in the following cases. The Pharisees made "the word of God of none effect" (Mark vii. 9–13; *cf.* Matt. xv. 4–9). The previous verses show that what they nullified was the commandment of God by Moses, which certainly was Scripture, and is set over against the tradition substituted by the scribes. When the book of the law was found, whether it was the Pentateuch or only Deuteronomy, king Josiah was deeply concerned, "because," he said, "our fathers have not kept

* Warmington, quoted by the Rev. T. R. Thompson, *Symposium on Inspiration*, p. 21.

the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book" (2 Chron. xxxiv. 21). What did he intend by "this book" but "the word of the Lord"? Ezra must have referred to the written prophecy of Jeremiah when he said Cyrus was stirred up, "that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished" (Ezra i. 1; *cf.* Jer. xxv. 12, xxix. 10; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21). St. James says God begat us to be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures by "the word of truth" (Jas. i. 18), which could be no other than the word of God. But St. Paul, indicating the same instrument for that end, calls it God-inspired Scripture (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16), whence it would appear "the holy Scriptures" and "the word of God" were interchangeable.

(iv.) Pre-eminently the revelations made by the teaching of Christ were the word of the Lord (1 Thess. iv. 15). But the difference between that and "the word of the Lord" which came through the prophets was rather in quality and degree than nature; and as delivered by Him the word of God was in human speech, finding its way soon after into the form of Scripture. Surely it did not cease to be the word of the Lord by taking the written form. If there be places where the word of the Lord does not mean Scripture, that does not prove it has never that meaning. The Hebrew epistle (iv. 7) makes Psalm xcv., which is Scripture, the word of God the Spirit, "as the Holy Ghost saith," who also by the mouth of David spake "the Scripture" concerning Judas (Acts i. 16). The 119th and other psalms evidently regard God's word as comprising His law, promises, and other communications, which already existed in the form of Scripture. The

writer was grieved because men kept not God's word; (אִמְרָתְךָ) (cxix. 158), which implies a standing rule of conduct. (See Pss. xviii. 30, cv. 19, cxix. *passim.*)

(v.) Unquestionably the phrase sometimes denotes the gospel. "The word of the Lord" "is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you" (1 Pet. i. 25;* *cf.* Isa. xl. 6–8). Of the gospel St. Paul speaks when he varies the name: "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. x. 16, 17). But the gospel was a verbal message, first spoken and then written. As therefore the gospel is the word of God, and embodied in the New Testament if anywhere, the word of God is in the form of Scripture.

(vi.) It matters little to say the sacred books as a whole are nowhere in the Bible called the word of God. How was the writer of any particular book to know precisely and certainly the complete canon? The information does not appear to have been given miraculously to any one. Each in his own time and place penned his own portion, probably not knowing what other portions the Spirit designed to produce. The title, word of God, was qualitative rather than quantitative, suggesting character and source rather than how much there was, or would be, of it.

(vii.) At the same time it cannot be maintained that the inspired Scriptures and the word of God are of precisely commensurate application. The word of God is broader and narrower than the Scriptures: broader, as all that God and His Son spoke is not in the Scriptures; narrower, as some parts of the Scriptures, *e.g.* evil utterances, were

* ῥῆμα in ver. 25. λόγος in ver. 23 and in 1 Thess. ii. 13; Heb. xiii. 7; 2 Tim. ii. 9.

not of God's speaking, except as He willed that the inspired Scriptures should report them, and that so they should form part of the collective book by which He would instruct and rule His people. To that extent He made the records of evil speeches His own. Macaulay is responsible, not for the massacre of Glencoe, but for his account of it. In much the same way many evil words and deeds are set down in Scripture under the control of God, and are thus part of His message.

In a stricter sense the Bible *contains* the word of God, as therein He expresses His own mind, and often imparts knowledge on subjects otherwise ineffable. With a different shade of meaning it *is* the word of God, as it is the instrument by which He communicates what He would have us know of things both good and evil. This does not imply that God communicates as much in any one part as in any other, say in Ruth or Joel as in the Gospel of St. John, but that all parts go to constitute the literary instrument He employs.

(viii.) Whether we may call the Scriptures the word of God is not the same as to ask what they call themselves. If they never applied that title to themselves, it might nevertheless be legitimate and convenient for us to apply it to them, should they substantially answer to the meaning of the name. "Triune God," "Divine-human Person," "infinite mind," "immortal soul," are not in the Bible; but as these terms correspond respectively to the objects to which we apply them, there is propriety in their use. For the same reason "the word of God" may be applied to the collection of writings which bears the impress of God's warrant. But the phrase "the word of

God" is in the Bible, and to nothing is it more appropriately applied than to the inspired documents in which God expresses His mind to man. In particular places the phrase denotes a verbal communication from Him; and the entire body of inspired Scriptures is of like nature. Our summarised conclusions are:

(*α*) That the word of God in the Bible always denotes a message or communication of thought from God to man; not thought apart from language or other symbol, nor language apart from thought.

(*β*) That the verbal form and the thought together are the word of God, whether so named or not, as a man's thought and the language in which he expresses it are his word.

(*γ*) From the nature of the case it was not to be expected that in any part of the Bible the phrase, word of God, would appear as the proper name or title of the entire collection of sacred books.

(*δ*) The phrase sometimes denotes the gospel, which is an impartation of thought embodied in words, whether spoken or written.

(*ε*) The teaching of Christ was the word of God to those who heard it, and is so to us as far as we have it in the New Testament.

(*ζ*) There is reason to believe the phrase is virtually, if not explicitly, applied in the Bible to sacred Scripture, though by no means always so.

(*η*) To call sacred Scripture the word of God is in harmony with the meaning of both phrases, and is as legitimate in that connexion as it is subservient to the cause of truth, giving prominence to the Divine authority of Scripture, and indicating where the word of God is to be found.

APPENDIX II. (p. 105).

Alleged Contradictions.

The cases in which the Bible is said to be at variance with itself are so numerous, that notice of all might require a considerable volume. For our purpose a few samples may suffice.

The statement of 1 Samuel vii. 13, that "the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel," is said to be contradicted by subsequent chapters (xiii. and xiv., etc.) which tell of the repeated attacks of the Philistines. The obvious meaning is that *at that time* they did not return, as the victory at Mizpeh terminated that war. It was after war broke out afresh that the Philistines came again. The very next words in the seventh chapter say, "And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel." But they came in great force in the reign of Saul. Had the writer or compiler, in the seventh chapter, meant absolutely that they never returned at any subsequent period, could he have been so short-sighted as to plainly contradict himself in the thirteenth chapter? Explaining his meaning in chap. vii. by chap. xiii., I see no trace of contradiction.

Again, in Joshua (chaps. xviii.–xxi.) the tribes receive their portions of land by lot; while in Judges (chap. i.) no lot is mentioned in connexion with the apportionment. To make this a contradiction, it must be shown that both passages refer to the same occasion, which

cannot be done. And even if it were done, the silence of Judges about the lot would not contradict the mention of it in Joshua. It is not improbable that the passages refer to different periods: in Joshua, to a preliminary arrangement; in Judges, to the actual conquest. Or it might be that after Joshua's death the Canaanites revolted, and had to be reconquered. If, again, 1 Chronicles xx. 6 says Elhanan slew the brother of Goliath, and the Septuagint version the same, while 2 Samuel xxi. 19 says he slew Goliath, the truthfulness of the record remains, whether, as is perhaps most probable, a transcriber omitted the word brother, or the writer referred to the family relationships in a less exact way than is usual with us,* or two different Goliaths are meant, seeing, on any of these suppositions, nothing intended by the history is seriously, if at all affected. Some such explanation is necessitated by the account of Goliath's death, 1 Samuel xvii. At any rate the difficulty is not lessened by the critical theory of the fictitious character of Chronicles. The accounts of the Egyptians and the Red Sea (Exod. xiv. and xv.) are represented as at variance. "According to him (J) . . . the Egyptians succeed at first in crossing it (Red Sea), and encounter the Hebrews on the eastern shore during the night." "According to the priestly code, the waves meet over the pursuers before they reach the farther shore." † The critic creates the discrepance for himself by reading into the account the statement that the Egyptians reached the eastern shore and there encountered the Hebrews, which no part of the narrative affirms. It says

* *Cf.* Zech. i. 1 with Ezra v. 1 and vi. 14, and Gen. xxix. 5 with Gen. xi. 26. Also see Gen. xxix. 12, 13.

† *History of Israel*, p. 352.

that the Egyptians pursuing were overwhelmed in the sea; and the account nowhere says anything at variance therewith. Wellhausen deems it worth his while to present many such cases as the above.

The account of the spies in Numbers xiii. and xiv. is adduced by Canon Driver (*Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, second edition, p. 58) as a "difference of representation"; and Professor A. R. S. Kennedy, B.D., singles out Driver's treatment of the case as a fine specimen of analysis, admiring its conclusiveness against the self-consistency of the history. Being briefer, let us take Kennedy's putting of Driver's argument (*The Expository Times*, Nov., 1891): "(1) 'In P the spies start from the wilderness of Paran; in JE presumably from Kadesh' (*cf.* xiii. 26, xxxii. 8). (2) 'In P they explore the whole country to Rehob in the far north'; in JE only as far as Hebron. (3) 'In P they represent the country as an impoverished land, not worth conquering (xiii. 32); in JE as a fertile one, which the Israelites have not the means of conquering (xiii. 27–31)'; and, finally, (4) in P both Joshua and Caleb are named among the spies, both pacify the people, and both are to be allowed to enter Canaan; in JE Joshua is not named as one of the spies, while Caleb alone stills the people, and is in consequence to be allowed to enter the promised land."

P denotes those portions which the critics assign for the most part to a late date, being largely post-exilic; JE those which are of earlier date, though not earlier than about the seventh or eighth century B.C.: the two kinds intermingle in the same narratives, but are distinguishable by the critics, who seem greatly to overrate their skill in this respect.

They suppose the disagreements to arise from making up the narrative from these and other different sources.

Among the things that first arrest one's attention in the case before us is the extent to which the objection to self-consistency in the account depends on the argument from silence. At several points silence seems to be regarded as equivalent to denial. A sufficient answer to the charge does not require that we supply information where the narrative gives none; but only that we suggest how, *for aught we know*, the statements may be all true.

It is important to note that in the case of the spies, as in others, whether the alleged discrepancies be styled "difference of representation" or "contradiction," they are not in the least degree got rid of by ascribing them to different sources. That would not lesson their incompatibility with inspiration, in which Canon Driver and presumably Professor Kennedy believe. That a compiler, or redactor, of ordinary discernment should attempt to make a coherent narrative by putting together plainly inconsistent statements, if they be such, is scarcely more plausible than that they should be the work of one and the same author. On either supposition the damage to the credit of the book is about the same.

After repeated examinations, I confess my inability to see any real contradiction in the story of the spies, whether its paragraphs be P or JE; and if there be none, the very reason for introducing the distinction of P and JE vanishes. For it is introduced in order to account for the supposed discrepancies.

This case being selected as one in which the disagreement is specially clear, and as thus affording indubitable proof

of diverse and discordant authorship joined together by a redactor, if, on inspection, it turns out to be no such thing, suspicion will fall justly on the stock of which this is a sample.

1. As to Kadesh, it was probably where the wilderness of Zin and that of Paran overlapped, or were not separated by any sharp line of division (*cf.* xiii. 3, 21, 26); in which case it would be correct to say the spies went from or returned to Kadesh, or Paran, or both. At any rate the partial identity of the localities named cannot be disproved, and consequently no discrepancy in that respect can be proved. Too little is known of their boundaries to afford evidence of disagreement (see Smith's *Dictionary* on Paran and Kadesh).

2. Their exploration from the south to Rehob and the far north was according to the direction of Moses (xiii. 16–21). But that is quite consistent with ver. 22, which says they started by the south, and went to Hebron, etc. The silence respecting their journey farther north is no proof that they did not go thither. In the absence of anything to the contrary in the latter passage, the fair inference is that they carried out all the instructions of Moses, which would require their going to the north. The "difference of representation" is that the later statement does not needlessly repeat all the fuller statement going just before.

3. The ten spies at first said the land was good, and unconquerable by Israel (xiii. 27, 28); but after Caleb's reply (xiii. 30), in order to maintain their position, they shifted their ground somewhat, and said it ate up the inhabitants (ver. 32); which might not mean that it was

"impoverished," but as some think, unhealthy. There was inconsistency on the part of the ten spies; there is none in the history.

4. As to Joshua. (1) He is named as one of the spies in xiii. 7–17 and xiv. 6. In xiv. 24 there might be no occasion to name him as such, especially seeing he ranked as a distinct party with Moses the ruler. Here again, as silence is no denial, there is no discrepancy. (2) At one stage of the proceedings Caleb alone is mentioned as seeking to pacify the people (xiii. 30). At a later, Caleb and Joshua together did it (xiv. 6). But this joint attempt to pacify them was at a different period of the proceedings. It was quite natural that one of them should first make the attempt alone; and as that failed and the crowd became only more violent, that both together should afterwards make a still greater effort. (3) Chap. xiv. 24 says Caleb shall enter the good land: it does not say Joshua shall not enter. His office as leader in succession to Moses might account for his not being there mentioned. More express mention of Caleb might be desirable, seeing his office did not insure his entrance. It is no contradiction or disagreement when ver. 30 says both shall enter. The whole narrative might very well be written by some one person who witnessed the events. Hence the surprising audacity of Professor Kennedy's assertion, "Facts such as these are clearly fatal to the tradition that Moses or a contemporary wrote these chapters as they stand." A careful examination is "fatal" to this sweeping generalization.

Once more, in *Hebraica* (July 1891, p. 281), referring to Genesis xxxii. 23, the Rev. B. W. Bacon writes: "In

ver. 23 *seq.* we have two contradictory statements, one that Jacob 'passed over the brook Jabbok,' and one that he remained behind, but sent over his retinue." It is not the question of composite authorship so much as the charge of a contradiction which here arrests attention. The account leaves ample room to suppose that, in the night, Jacob first saw his family and retinue across, probably crossing with them; and then returning for solitude and prayer, found himself alone with God, and in the morning rejoined his company. Delitzsch remarks: "When Jacob was now again alone on the northern bank." Where then is the "contradiction"?

I make no pretension whatever to the position of an expert in the higher criticism. Fortunately for the cause of religious truth, that qualification is not necessary to a fair estimate of a great deal which the criticism would teach us. The materials to be studied are chiefly within the Bible itself, and within the purview of a candid, careful student of average discrimination who will diligently follow the critics through their allegations of discrepancy, untruthfulness, contradiction, and untrustworthiness, with the grounds on which these charges are made. Much of his work consists in comparing passages which are said to disagree with each other; examining portions which are said to be discordant with their context in regard to style, date, subject, fact, doctrine, or other particular; and weighing the reasons given by the critics for resolving continuous discourse into unseemly patchwork, and for drawing other sweeping conclusions. Such a student need not, and in matters so grave will not, depend on the bare dictum of experts, but will freely and carefully apply his own

untechnical judgment, nor hesitate to guard himself against any theological bias, assumption of undue authority, or vicious reasoning on the part even of experts. Having a good knowledge of the Old Testament and a genuine love of truth, an ordinary student of the Bible may examine and judge of most of the questions for himself, without being guilty of presumption should he feel compelled to reject many things asserted by the critics; and considering what tremendous issues are at stake,—for all along my reference is to the more serious results,—he is justified in demanding clear and cogent proof in support of the changes proposed.

With a mind anxious to appreciate all that could be adduced in favour of the more important results of the higher criticism, and ready to welcome whatever was manifestly true, I have striven to understand the subject. And I honestly declare that the more closely I endeavour to follow the subjective criticism of Kuenen and Wellhausen, and for that matter some of their British admirers, the more I am struck with the lack of proof in many of their assertions. I attribute this, not to any want of ability or honesty on their part, but to their undue reliance on a process too often inadequate. The subjective criterion on which they lean so heavily, though it is not without its use, is precarious, especially as they employ it, and in relation to matters so far removed from modern conditions. I think too some of them are often influenced more than they themselves suppose by their naturalistic tendencies. Their unproved theory of sacerdotal development, their habit of mistaking silence for negative proof, and their refusal to hear the evidence of the New Testament also

mislead the judgment. The many points at which critics even of the same school diverge into different judgments, and the constant change of position in the same critic respecting the sources, character, and dates of Scripture passages, illustrate the deficiency of their criteria.

The analyses by which the critics profess to show how the Old Testament is made up of miscellaneous and often heterogeneous fragments woven, or rather thrown together, by redactors, create a *prima facie* objection to the criticism. For example, the analysis of Dillmann or of Wellhausen supposes, not a few stray passages misplaced in the body of the books, but many hundreds of sentences, texts, or paragraphs set with others of different origin; indeed that the books are largely built up with but little skill, out of passages and phrases from various quarters, into a strangely speckled literature, changing at innumerable points from one sort of material to another. The criticism makes a heavy demand on our credulity when it requires us to believe the Old Testament consists in mosaic work of this kind; but the demand is greatly enhanced when it also requires us to believe the critics are able to divine the respective sources of the innumerable components of the books, especially as we note how they differ among themselves, and how often the same critic abandons one conclusion for another.

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